

The Glorious Glosters No 1

Week ending June 12 1954
Every Wednesday Fourpence

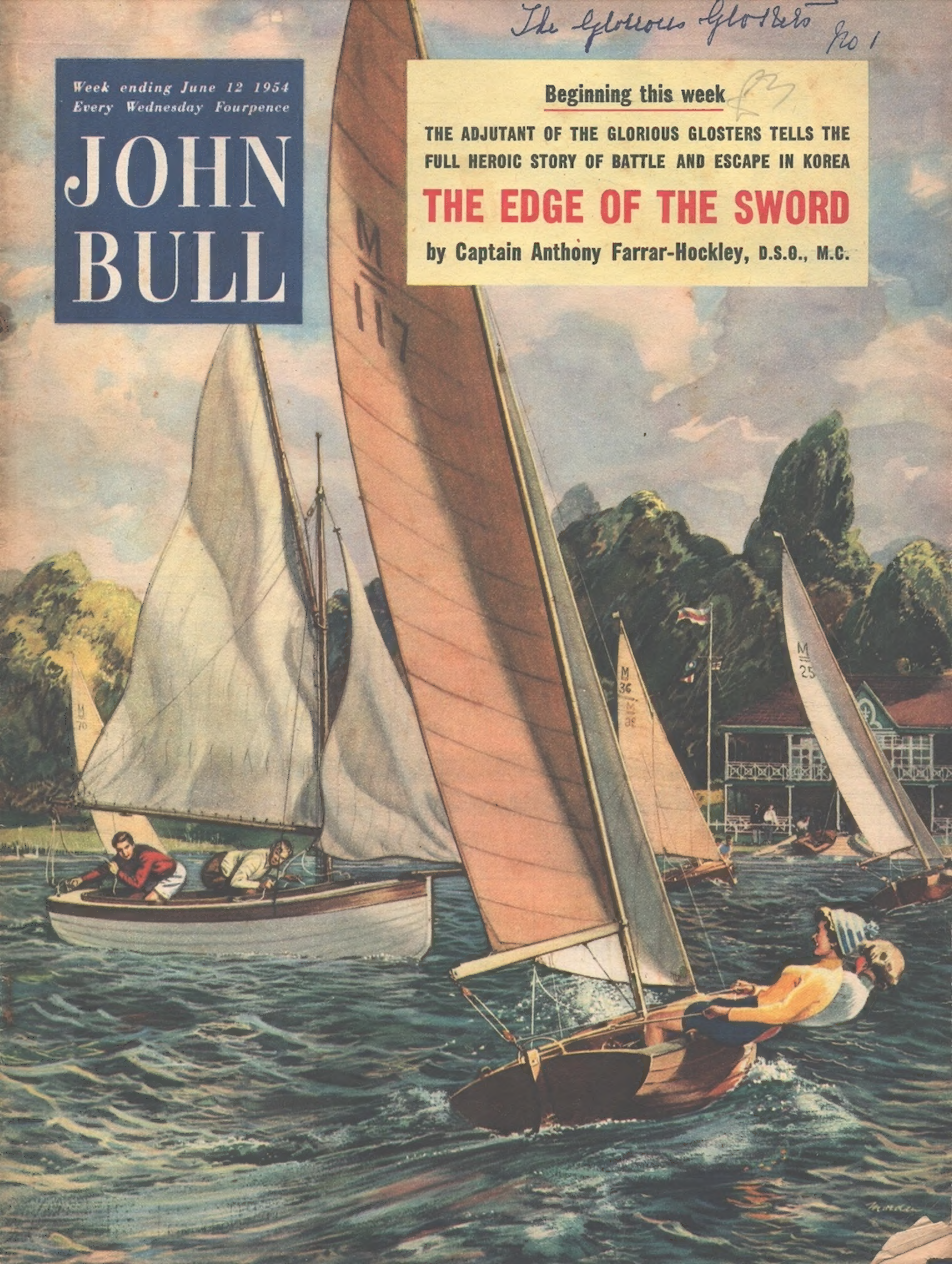
JOHN BULL

Beginning this week

THE ADJUTANT OF THE GLORIOUS GLOSTERS TELLS THE
FULL HEROIC STORY OF BATTLE AND ESCAPE IN KOREA

THE EDGE OF THE SWORD

by Captain Anthony Farrar-Hockley, D.S.O., M.C.





WHEN A GIRL LIVES ALONE

IT'S WONDERFUL AT FIRST: A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN. BUT IT CAN BE LONELY, TOO...SO ONE DAY AT THE OFFICE...



Cut rate

MRS. ELLEN ABRAHAM, the wife of a retired Customs officer, owns her six-roomed detached house at 28 Wilton Gardens, Shirley, Southampton. Its rateable value is £32, and this year she must pay £34 2s. 8d. in rates.

Nearby is the factory of a famous aircraft manufacturing firm. It is busy and prosperous. Yet it pays rates at only one-quarter of Mrs. Abraham's level.

Instead of £1 1s. 4d. in the £, the factory is rated at only 5s. 4d. So the firm gets the same roads, street lighting, fire brigade, police and the rest of the local services at a quarter the cost. That is quite a bargain.

SUCH is the effect of "derating," the system under which industrial premises all over the country pay rates at only a quarter the level of houses. "It's most unfair," says Mrs. Abraham.

Similarly, nursery gardens, which are a flourishing industry in Southampton, pay no rates at all. They are classed as agricultural land, which has been completely derated for twenty-five years.

In effect, Mrs. Abraham and her neighbours subsidize both the rate-free nurserymen and the quarter-rated factories out of their own pockets.

This year, Southampton City Council needs to raise £1,830,000. Because derating

costs the city £165,000 a year, or nearly £1 per head of the people, the rates have gone up again by 5d.

IF derating were ended, Southampton could either have cut the rates by 1s. 8d. in the £ or spent more money on its blitz reconstruction.

Southampton is typical of the big towns which are badly hit. At the other end of England, Carlisle loses the equivalent of a 1s. 6d. rate because of cut rates.

Every householder in the country is paying more than he would if the burden were more equally divided.

That is why the Association of Municipal Corporations and other bodies representing councils are demanding an end to derating. They estimate the countrywide loss at about £60 million a year.

Derating was brought in mainly to help industry and agriculture at a time of depression. Today, industry does not need such favours at private householders' expense; agriculture is now subsidized in other ways.

FORMER City Treasurer of Manchester, Sir James Lythgoe, considers that an end to derating is justified by change of circumstances since it was brought in.

"There is no single way by which additional revenue could more quickly be found for local authorities," he says.

Ratepayers everywhere will think of an even better use for the money—to bring down their own soaring rates.

THIS WEEK'S COVER

DINGHY races often result in this sort of chaos. The boys should have remembered the old seafaring jingle: "If to your starboard red appear, it is your duty to keep clear." The difficulty, as artist Bill Morden knows well, is to persuade your boat to obey the rudder. A beginner himself, he crews in an old tub during holidays. "But embarrassing moments such as these," he says, "are worth risking for the thrill of sailing."



"Hoity Toity—
that's no way to behave"

SAID

RICHARD TODD



HOITY TOITY, one of Richard Todd's racehorses, snorted — positively bridled, in fact.

"He has to be the centre of the picture," said Richard. "As long as we're talking about him, he's quite happy, not to say smug. But change the subject, and he immediately takes umbrage. All these tantrums just because I offered you a cigarette, Nobby."

"Well, you can't blame him," said Nobby Clarke, the stable boy. "He doesn't smoke."

"Poor old fellow, I'm sorry for him."

"Me, too. Must be a dog's life being a horse."

"Yes, no wonder he's hoity toity—the enjoyment we get from a Capstan means nothing to him. Except, of course, that his master takes a nice, friendly view of life . . . Come to think of it, Nobby, you might almost say that a cigarette makes a man more human."



Have a CAPSTAN

★ RICHARD TODD, an Associated British star, plays the name part in Walt Disney's All-Live-Action Technicolor film of the legendary hero of the Highlands 'ROB ROY'.

— they're made to make friends

W. D. & H. O. Wills, Branch of The Imperial Tobacco Company (of Great Britain & Ireland), Ltd.

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INTERFLORA

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It's easy to say it with flowers. Just contact any member of Interflora who will gladly arrange the delivery of fresh untravelled flowers whenever and wherever you wish, at home or abroad.



Sir Philip Sidney, valourous soldier, sparkling courtier, 'the brightest jewel in her court' according to good Queen Bess, the very man to have revelled (if he lived today) in the luxury of Cussons Imperial Leather toilet luxuries.

Cussons Famous CHUBBY SHAVING SOAP

THE CHOICE OF THE
NEW ELIZABETHANS

The sturdy shape of Chubby Shaving stick, with its wide surface for easy lathering and discreet Imperial Leather fragrance, makes it the choice of all who treat shaving seriously. Refills for the attractive container always available. From all good shops.



Cussons Sons & Co. Ltd, 84 Brook St, W1

SEE YOUR SKIN TROUBLE GO in a few days



RUB ON—RASH GONE

SPOTS, pimples, eczema and rashes do not heal unless you get at their cause, the germs beneath your skin. Valderma, the new double antiseptic balm, gets right under the pores and kills germs almost immediately. Make this test and see for yourself. Rub a little Valderma on your skin where the trouble is, several times a day. Repeat this treatment for a week.

Within a day or two you will see the difference. Your skin will be clear and healthy. Valderma is creamy, non-greasy, does not clog the pores, allows septic matter to escape. It is soothing and healing; relieves itching and irritation. Valderma is invisible on your skin and will not stain your clothing. You simply rub it in and watch your skin trouble go. At chemists: Tubes 1s. 8d., jars 2s. 2½d. and 3s. 9d.

(3486)

FREE SPEECH

Does it pay to take a degree?

THE other day I was invited to tea by an uncle, and during the evening he asked me if I had decided what to do when I left school.

I told him my father wanted me to go to a university and take an arts degree. My uncle seemed rather surprised, and said he never expected his brother to advocate that. When they were young they both had the chance of university careers. My uncle took a degree; my father went straight into business.

"You can see for yourself who is better off now," said my uncle. "Your father has a fine house and a car, and I have to struggle to afford a holiday. Believe me, they don't take much notice of degrees when you get out into the world. All they want to know is whether you can do the job. And a university can't teach you that."

When I told Father of this he said that he had always felt something was missing from his life—a good education. But I'm wondering if I wouldn't rather have money than a good knowledge of the classics.—T. B. D., Lancashire.

Reprieve

ONE night recently I ran over something unusual in the road. I stopped my car and found I had killed a snake. From its mouth hopped a frog, apparently quite unhurt.—J. W. MARTIN, Syston, Leicestershire.

Frogs, newts, toads and fish make up the normal diet of a grass snake, says the London Zoo. They are swallowed whole.

The Family Upstairs

FOR many years a pair of jackdaws have reared their young in an elm tree in my garden. A hole lower down the trunk has been inhabited for about the same time by a pair of squirrels. The two families are by no means the best of neighbours. Every morning during the mating



season we hear their squabbles. The jackdaws circle the tree to attack the squirrels as they sit on a branch outside their home. The squirrels put up a brave resistance, squaring up to their foe like prizefighters and beating them off whenever they get too near.—K. JOHNSON, Somerset.

Return Ticket

LAST week, as I was emptying my dry washing from a linen basket in the kitchen, a mouse jumped out. It had obviously strayed from the field adjoining our garden and had hidden in the basket while I was taking clothes from the line. For the next day or two the mouse seemed to be everywhere. I almost thought it was

following me around. I made several attempts to catch it, and my husband set a trap, all without success. Yesterday, when I took out my basket with some blankets to air in the sun, the mouse popped out and ran away.—MRS. G. JORDAN, Surrey.

Dollars And Sense

WE tend to think of Americans as reckless spenders, but I saw a U.S. Air Force jeep the other day with this economy note stencilled on its side: "THIS VEHICLE COST 1067.19 [dollars]. PLEASE BE CAREFUL."—F. CAIRN, Railway Terrace, Sutton Oak, St. Helens, Lancashire.

To induce Servicemen to take greater care of equipment, the price is marked on everything used by the U.S.A.F. in this country—even boxes of screws.

Window Dressing

SEARCHING the advertisements in my local paper for a second-hand car, I found one offering the model I wanted. It didn't sound particularly good, and the price was high. In the

ALIBI FOR MURDER

by A. E. Martin

IN JOHN BULL
NEXT WEEK

same column a similar car was described in glowing terms and at a much lower price. Convinced it was a bargain, I wrote at once. I received a reply saying the car had been sold, so I applied to the box number advertising the other car. The letter informing me that this car, too, had been sold came from the same man at the same address. Quite clearly it was the same car. The seller had used one advertisement to convince customers that the second was announcing a bargain.—J. G. BEECH, Staffordshire.

Flying Colours

NEAR my home in the Cotswolds, a hawk swooped on a young rabbit. It was about to carry off its prey when a boy intervened. The hawk flew upwards, poised, and swept down viciously, alighting on the boy's head. It then made off with his cap, dropping it in a field some distance away.—F. W. KEEP, Woodfield, Cam, Dursley, Gloucestershire.

Truth—Or Tact?

WHEN I was negotiating an insurance policy I was told by a married woman to call again to see her husband. She herself was in favour of taking the policy. My second visit interrupted a meal at which the husband was complaining that his food was badly cooked. He appealed to me for my opinion. I didn't know whether to uphold his objections—as I wanted to obtain his consent for the policy—or to side with his wife. I decided to be truthful. It was an indifferent meal, and I said so. The wife turned against me, and I lost

the business.—THOMAS S. DERBYSHIRE, Hulton Lane, Bolton, Lancs.

Never Never Land

FOR a year I rented a gas cooker and gas fire from the Gas Board. They charged me 18s. a quarter. When I decided to buy both outright, they quoted me two guineas. I am interested to know how they justify a charge of 72s. a year for something that is apparently worth only 42s.—M. K. R., Chelsea.

A person hiring gas appliances may normally purchase them at any time, says a Gas Board official. The price depends on how long they have been hired. In this case, the appliances have probably been hired for some years by a previous tenant.

Banking On It



IN our office the girls have invented a novel way of saving for holidays and Christmas presents. We have started a "Rainy Day Fund" to which all must contribute according to the weather. Our tariff ranges from a penny contribution on a dry day to threepence halfpenny for hailstones, and fourpence for thunder and lightning. As we live in Scotland we sometimes find our weekly subscriptions are rather heavy.—MRS. G. M. HARRIS, Thornhill, Johnstone, Renfrewshire.

House Doctors?

CHILDREN have amazing memories ("Free Speech," May 15). Our neighbour's child was in hospital for fifteen months from birth. Six months after her discharge the decorators came to the house. When she saw that they were wearing white coats she screamed that they were doctors.—MRS. E. DALTRY, Winkfield, Berks.

Covers On Tour

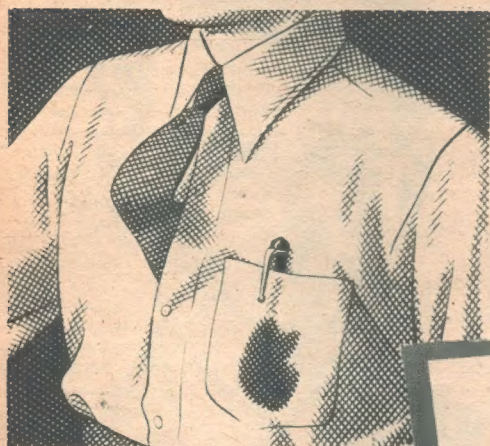
AT a Mothers' Union exhibition recently, I found that one display was composed almost entirely of JOHN BULL covers. They were being used to illustrate a course in home making, and each cover depicted an aspect of



the course. The exhibition is touring the north Midlands.—J. M. B. STEVENSON, Prospect Road, Carlton, Nottingham.

The photograph shows part of the display on view at Newark.

John Bull pays one guinea for each letter published in "Free Speech", and at the usual rates for photographs. Readers with problems (other than medical) should write to the John Bull Free Advice Service



**STOP ALL THIS
BALLPOINT MESS!**



Platignum *Kleenpoint* GUARANTEES A CLEAN POINT FOR GOOD! -thanks to marvellous *'Dri-Ink'*

Dri-Ink cannot leak—either at the point or anywhere else. Inky fingers are out . . . ink stained clothes a thing of the past.

Dri-Ink cannot transfer—that's why bankers and lawyers all approve Kleenpoint writing. It really does dry as you write . . . can't transfer onto fingers or clothes.

Dri-Ink flows smoothly—writes sweetly and swiftly right to the last drop. The precision-made ball keeps the flow steady and even—won't dry up or flow too freely.

Dri-Ink is washable—if accidentally brought into contact with clothes

Dri-Ink washes out without trouble.

Dri-Ink cannot fade—is not affected by artificial light or strong sunshine. Once on paper it's good for generations—that's another reason why lawyers like it!

Other Kleenpoint 'plus' points are a faultless push-button retractable action (no cap to lose) large capacity refills (easily obtainable, write more words than ever before) and a wide range of barrel colours.

Test one today at your nearest stationer, jeweller or store and you'll find that Kleenpoint is a pen you've always wanted to own.

5'9

**CLEAN
HANDS**

**CLEAN
CLOTHES**

IT'S BEST TO BUY

Platignum

MADE IN RED ENGLAND

Kleenpoint



Big Chief Red Cloud

HAS "HEAP GOOD" CEREAL NOW

Big Chief Red Cloud (real name Robbie) ... wears a heap good Hi-Hat cut from a Puffed Wheat packet! Once he was a gloomy Paleface at breakfast and it was "Oh Mum, same kind of cereal again!" But clever Mum had a brainwave — she bought a packet of

the new, tastier Puffed Wheat. Red Cloud loves that roasted nutty flavour. Now there's peace in the "wigwam" at breakfast while Red Cloud and family eat heap big plates of delicious Puffed Wheat!



"Worth their weight in gold" to INDIGESTION sufferers



Old Age Pensioner pays tribute to MOORLANDS

"I have been troubled with wind and indigestion till a few days ago I came to try your MOORLAND Tablets," writes Mr. H. of Ashton-under-Lyne, "I might tell you they are too cheap—they are worth their weight in gold."

When you're troubled with Indigestion

MOORLANDS

BRING SWEET RELIEF

8 rolls (80 tablets) 1'11d.—4 rolls (40 tablets) 1'-. From all chemists



Millions have found Moorlands a blessing. They are so good and bring sweet relief to sufferers from Heartburn, Acidity, Flatulence, Biliousness and Palpitation due to Indigestion.

Apples for health...so



Bulmer's for me

An apple a day is the first rule of good health. Bulmer's cider is made from the juice of ripe fresh apples; to drink it each day is a pleasant way of keeping fit. When you are tired or thirsty you will be delighted to feel how a glass of Bulmer's refreshes you.

Bulmer's—the most popular cider of all

H. P. BULMER & CO. LTD., HEREFORD

RHEUMATISM ATTACKS YOUNG AS WELL AS OLD

HOUSEWIFE (37)



Recent photograph of Mrs. Wilson

GARDENER (70)



Recent photograph of Mr. Hill

BOTH FOUND

Rheumatic Misery relieved by Fynnon

These stories—two of many—tell of the relief from rheumatic pain which sufferers are receiving from Fynnon Salt.

Mrs. Jenny Wilson, 37, farm worker's wife of Charing, Kent, writes: "For the past year I have suffered attacks of fibrositis, gradually these attacks got more painful... unable to bear the pain... I started using Fynnon Salt. The results were amazing... Now I have started my spring cleaning and it is a real pleasure doing it... I shall always have Fynnon Salt in my medicine chest..."

Mr. A. J. Hill, 70-year-old gardener of Windsor, Berks., also gives Fynnon Salt credit for relieving his rheumatism. He writes: "... two years ago I could hardly move... I had to get my wife to push me out of bed... I could not get on my cycle. Then a friend recommended Fynnon Salt, and many thanks to them I have been back doing gardening, including scythe work."

(The originals of these two letters can be seen at our offices).

Recent findings show that, although the more persistent kind of rheumatism develops later in life, the danger years for fibrositis, neuritis and lumbago are between 25 and 45 and that the improper elimination of waste matter from the body frequently contributes to rheumatic conditions.

How Fynnon can help

Fynnon makes a two-way attack on impurities. 1. It is an effective but gentle aperient, using body fluid filtered through intestinal tissues to rid the system of waste matter.

2. It is a diuretic, flushing the kidneys and reducing impurities in the blood—approved treatment for many rheumatic conditions.

Take a teaspoonful of Fynnon every morning as soon as the first twinges are felt. You too will find marked relief. But if you are seriously worried about your condition, don't delay to consult your doctor.

FYNNON SALT

LARGE TIN 2/4!

For the relief of all types of muscular Rheumatism, Neuritis, Sciatica, Lumbago and Fibrositis.

FYNNON LIMITED, BRENTFORD, MIDDLESEX

*Beginning the gallant story by the adjutant of the Glorious Glosters
who fought at the Imjin River—and endured captivity in Chinese hands*

THE EDGE OF THE SWORD

by Captain ANTHONY FARRAR-HOCKLEY, D.S.O., M.C.
THE GLOUCESTERSHIRE REGIMENT



Forward, where the enemy waited under the oaks, was a raging mass of flame from the napalm bombs. Those men would never make their attack

DOWN BY Gloster Crossing, where the Imjin River splashed against the fifty-gallon drums that marked the ford, sixteen men of 7 Platoon were watching as the moon rose over the broken walls of the village and lit the black waters.

A voice said: "There's someone at the crossing, sir." Guido looked across at the north bank and saw that four figures had entered the stream and begun to cross, moving clumsily as the current caught at their knees, their thighs, their waists.

The night wind seemed lifted among the old trenches. It seemed as if a sigh stirred the men in ambush before they awoke to complete, absolute alertness; before the shock of certain, impending action was absorbed and they became accustomed to the thought.

Now the first enemy crossers were nearer

the shore and had been caught up by a further three. Already, the splashing of their cold bodies, pushing across the tide, might be heard above the noise of the river lapping upon the beach.

Now their figures were more distinct, their caps and tunics moonlit, their weapons outlined. Soon they would leave the water, step up on to the shore and then ascend the cliff, up through the cutting.

No other sounds yet broke the stillness, except the river splashing round the stones, the markers and the men. No cry of fear, no fleeing feet, no shot in panic disturbed the April midnight quiet. These men were resolute.

No cough, no careless cigarette, no clatter

of a weapon clumsily handled alarmed the enemy's approach. These men were trained.

The seven moonlit figures still came on: each second adding another detail to their faces, arms and accoutrements. Another twenty yards, fifteen, now ten, now five. . . .

The light machine-guns fired. The silence died abruptly as the guns' fierce echoes sounded east and west along the river between the cliffs; south to the slopes of Castle Hill, where eyes and ears, alerted by the flash, strained for more news. And north, across the river, the noise of battle reached whatever force might be in wait along the hills that, almost yesterday, we had searched so closely.

The seven men were gone, swept away lifeless by the fast-flowing stream; except for one, poor wretch, whose groans were dying

ILLUSTRATION BY NASH

away in the shallows as the bloody water washed over him.

But more were coming—hailing, many screaming, as they ran into the water, firing their weapons, splashing; careless of noise now that they saw from where the crossing was opposed.

Seven, seventeen, twenty-seven, thirty, more than thirty came stumbling and heaving their heavy limbs against the current's drag, panting and excited as they tried to bear down the ambuscade by weight of numbers.

The echoing shots were now all theirs. A Russian-type sub-machine-gun—the "burp" gun—fired until its magazine was emptied, then another sent its charge of bullets to the cliff tops, and another split the mud and wattle of the empty village walls. There was no lack of fire from the attackers, and their comrades on the northern bank provided support; heavy and light machine-guns fired from bank to cliff across the water; mortars threw their streamlined bombs up into the night. Flash followed flash; the air above the river trembled with explosions.

Still there was no reply from the patrol on the hilltop. From somewhere to the south, their ears detected the sounds they awaited; and, almost quicker than the thought, the shivering noise of shells was overhead as our artillery fire descended with all its might upon the northern bank and shores. In each sudden flare of an exploding shell was seen the last black veil of smoke from those preceding it. The mortars and machine-guns faltered and died away.

New Wave Of Yelling Attackers

But now, again, the crossing party moved in shallow water. Again light machine-guns, rifles, Sten guns, found a target each among the yelling figures underneath the cliffs; grenades were hurled among the leaders. The light of the full moon was temporarily augmented by the flares from our light mortars.

Confusion now appeared among the enemy: of those that stood unwounded some drew back; one yelling figure waved them on from deeper water near midstream; others remained in doubt, shouting in high-pitched voices from the cover of scattered boulders in the shallows, arguing back and forth. Two wounded men, who turned towards the northern bank, were swept, quite suddenly, downstream, their weakened limbs incapable of fighting the river.

The ambush party's weapons found new marks among the indecisive ranks now scattered below them. New flashes and explosions rose again to force decision on the enemy, whose few remaining numbers rushed in panic back across the river, the last shots of the defenders cutting the stragglers down into the water, to be swept away westward through the Imjin's mouth into the Yellow Sea.

Now there came a lull. The men in ambush examined their weapons. Guido, their commander, checked the ammunition. Among the village walls, upon the cliff top, a few quiet phrases were exchanged; a drink of water taken; some black smudges of burnt powder removed. The April night seemed warm to these men.

Upon the other shore, the enemy formed again to storm the crossing at all costs, the numbers of the force now ten times greater than the first small group.

Again, the tiny, dark figures were lit by the moon as they descended the northern bank. The word passed along the ambush lines. Again, the gunners fired with terrible effect. The flares burned brightly over the black water. The lull was over: battle was joined once more.

★ ★ ★

On Castle Hill and that long hill on its right flank the men of D Company stand to. Riflemen, machine-gunners, mortar and gunner observation posts, signallers, medical orderlies, stretcher-bearers wait now, alert and ready; those under cover smoking; those outside scanning the moonlit slopes that lead to their



Captain and Mrs. Farrar-Hockley

"THE EDGE OF THE SWORD" was written by Captain Farrar-Hockley in six weeks of round-the-clock work. With his wife to check the manuscript, he set down the vivid story of his experiences, based on his own recollections and his long talks with Colonel Carne and other Gloster ex-captives during his journey home after his release in August, 1953.

The thirty-year-old son of a journalist, Farrar-Hockley was born in Coventry, and educated at Exeter School. He was under-age when he joined the Gloucestershire Regiment, as a regular soldier; later, he was commissioned into the Parachute Regiment. In the second World War he served in North Africa, Italy and Greece, was mentioned in despatches, and was awarded the M.C.

He returned to the Glosters in 1948. For his part in the Imjin River battle, he was awarded the D.S.O. He is now a staff captain at Eastern Command Headquarters.

"The Edge of the Sword" will be published as a book by Frederick Muller on June 14, price 12s. 6d.

Below are the full names of Captain Farrar-Hockley's comrades in "The Edge of the Sword"

GUIDO.....Lt. G. S. B. Temple, M.C.
GUY.....Major G. T. Ward, T.D., R.A.
RICHARD....Capt. St. M. Reeve-Tucker
JOHN.....Lt. John Maycock
MR. HOBBS..R.S.M. (now Lt.) E. J. Hobbs, M.B.E.
CARL.....Capt. (now Maj.) C. S. R. Dain, R.A.
FRANK....Capt. F. R. Wisbey, M.C., R.A.
KEN.....Major K. R. S. Trevor, D.S.O., O.B.E.
BRIGADIER...Brigadier (now Maj.-Gen.) T. Brodie, C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O.
PEGLAR.....Sergeant H. J. Peglar
BOB.....Capt. R. P. Hickey, M.C., M.B., B.S., R.A.M.C.
SPIKE.....Capt. H. J. Pike
LUCAS.....Sgt. W. A. Lucas
DENIS.....Major E. D. Harding, D.S.O.
DONALD.....Lt. D. G. Allman
TERRY.....Lt. T. E. Waters, G.C.
JUMBO.....Capt. A. N. Wilson
TOM.....Lt. T. Conneely
RONNIE.....Capt. R. Washbrook, R.A.
RECCE.....Capt. A. M. L. Newcombe, M.C., R.A.
SAM.....Major P. W. Weller, M.B.E.

positions, searching vainly the black pools of shadow that mark folds and depressions in the ground.

Behind, a little to the south, and east, the other members of the battalion group are wakened, too, and ready. Long since, the medium and heavy mortars have been firing and the valley mouth, where the main headquarters stands, has echoed to the noise. The regimental aid post staff is up, the dressings and the instruments laid out.

Drivers and drummers, snipers and signallers perform their duty or stand by. The cookhouse has brewed up a special tea container. Guy listens to the signals of the field regiment on his wireless and then comes into the command vehicle, where the air is thick with tobacco smoke. Sergeant Lucas, the "G" clerk, brings

in more coffee which he has brewed up. Richard brings in another message from Guido.

"They're still trying to cross in hordes, sir," he says to the Colonel, who has just come in. "In another five minutes, he reckons they'll be out of ammunition."

The Colonel looks at Guy and then at me.

"Tell them to start withdrawing in three minutes," he says. "Guy, I'm going to ask you for one last concentration; then start dropping them short of Gloster Crossing as soon as the patrol is back at the first cutting south of the river."

By Gloster Crossing there is another lull: a fourth attempt to cross has just been repulsed. The smell of mould and decay from the village and the cold river smell are mingling with the acrid fumes of burnt explosive. Guido's ammunition is down to less than three rounds per rifle, to less than half a magazine for the Sten machine-carbines and the Brens.

But the task is nearly done as Guido looks at his watch. The second hand moves upwards, the minute hand closes on its next division. One after another, sixteen shadows slip south out of the village. Already some of them have formed a little covering party at the bund while their comrades go past, when they, in turn, slip softly back under cover of another party.

Noiseless as shadows they slip back across the unsown rice paddy. Calmly, as they have fought, they withdraw. Back to their slit trenches to continue the fight from there. Behind them, the body of the enemy remains unharmed—but already he has a bloody nose.

Enemy Plan—One Swift Assault

Originally, the Chinese plan had been a simple, silent night assault straight through the front of our positions. D Company on their left and A Company on their right once removed by overwhelming, fierce assault, they reckoned on a swift withdrawal by our frightened remnant. Following this, they planned, at best, to cut the rest off and thus destroy at once the whole left wing of the U.N. 3rd Division; and, at worst, to open speedily the way to Seoul.

Speed in their plan was all-important; time was against them. Irrespective of our weakness and their corresponding strength in men, they could not force a battle once our own command, appreciating where the main threat lay, disposed our few reserves to counter it.

Our skill, and equipment, were superior to theirs, once opportunity was given us to meet them in the open. And, too, once they deployed completely, their system of communication was so poor that they could not manoeuvre speedily, either to exploit our weakness as it became apparent, or to gather their strength against a counter-attack from us.

Thus, their aim was to break into, destroy and pass beyond our forces holding the approach to Seoul before we knew from where the main thrust would come. And it was feasible, so thinly held were those approaches, with such gaps between the flanks of one unit and another.

Each of our units was thus forced to fight a lone battle, to resist stubbornly until the enemy's intention was clear, and the field might be arranged again to meet the new requirement.

Second Threat Over Secret Ford

Already the Chinese time schedule for the battle had been disrupted. The check by Guido's ambush at the crossing had put them back for many precious hours of darkness; precious since the daylight would bring aircraft to restore, at least in part, the balance which their numbers now disturbed.

The second crossing point, unknown to us, lay west of Gloster Crossing on an unmarked, ancient underwater bridge that brought them straight across on to a sand spit, thrown up by the river waters on a hairpin bend. These were the attackers who crept forward on to Castle Hill to meet A Company in a mighty clash of



After the Imjin River battle, in which many Glosters were surrounded and captured, the few who escaped entrench themselves in new positions

arms. At that same moment the assault force fording at Gloster Crossing should have attacked D Company. But they were still reforming from the blows the ambush party had inflicted.

Now, therefore, with silence once again restored after the noisy struggle at the crossing, a party of about three hundred Chinese riflemen crept up the slopes towards the Castle Site, while others slipped across the terraced paddy fields to take the western flank and rear defences of A Company.

Tin Cans Rattle Their Warning

Below John's trenches on the Castle Site, a tin can holding stones is rattling; another sounds close by. The watchers, listeners all, respond without a sound to this first warning. The barbed wire rattles, barb scrapes barb and locks; the tin cans on the wire sound again. A whispered word and all safety catches are released. Here and there the split pins of grenades are eased across the cast-iron shoulders.

A faint, incomprehensible sound is heard in the night; the air is ruffled lightly; an object falls near, by a slit trench, smoking. Less than two seconds pass in which the occupants regard it, understand its nature, duck and take cover as it explodes. This is the first grenade; the first of many.

Echoing now, the hill is lit with flame that flickers from above and below. Mortars begin to sound down near the Imjin and the call is taken

up by those that lie to the south behind C Company. Slowly, like a fire, the flames spread east and west around Castle Hill; and east again across the village of Choksong as the enemy from Gloster Crossing, tardily launched at last, meets and is repulsed by D Company.

Now, almost hand to hand, the Chinese and British soldiers meet. Figures leap up from the attacking force, run forward to new cover and resume their fire upon the defenders who, coolly enough, return their fire as targets come to view, as the attackers close with them. Occasionally an individual climax may be reached in an encounter between two men when, only a few feet apart, each waits to catch the other unawares, sees a target, fires and leaps across to follow his advantage.

And now, carefully planned defensive fire is summoned to the defenders' aid. The Vickers guns cut across the cliffs and slopes by which the Chinese forces climb to the attack. Long bursts of fire—ten, twenty, thirty, forty rounds—are fired and fired again: the water in the cooling jackets warms, the ground is littered with spent cases. The mortars and the gunners drop their high explosive in among the crowded ranks that press on to the hill slopes from the river.

Such are the enemy's losses that now and then there is a brief respite for the defence as the attackers are withdrawn for reinforcement. The weight of defensive fire is so great that the enemy has realized he must concentrate his

strength in one main thrust up to each hilltop. As the night wanes, fresh hundreds are committed to this task, and the tired defenders, much depleted, face yet one more assault. . . .

☆ ☆ ☆

It was the third day of the battle: for hours now we had fought against heavy odds. The valley where the main headquarters had once stood was now deserted. Every attempt by the Chinese to penetrate the abandoned dug-outs, tents and vehicles that remained had been thwarted, for our positions commanded the valley almost as much as theirs.

Step by step, we had been forced back. We had lost Castle Hill: then the Chinese overran another defence point, and dominated headquarters from a height. The Colonel gave the order to withdraw, and we regrouped on a knoll, waiting for the next attack.

Here and there, by the road and stream in the valley below us, the bodies of bolder Chinese soldiers provided a warning to any of their fellows who hoped to venture forward to our old headquarters. But so acute were our shortages that we decided to attempt what they had failed to achieve.

We needed, first, ammunition; second—almost equal in importance—batteries for the wireless sets; third, a little food. Mr. Hobbs began to assemble a party of men from support company and headquarters, together with some of the



With rifle and grenades, Colonel Carne himself routed a group of the enemy. "Just shooing some Chinese," he casually told Farrar-Hockley



The three artillery captains with the Glosters—Ronnie Washbrook, Carl by the Chinese. They directed accurate gunfire on to the enemy troops as

native porters with whom he would descend to the valley. Guy made up a small party of gunners to pick up batteries for his own sets.

The machine-guns waited on either side of the knoll. The northern and eastern slopes rising from the valley disappeared as shells, bursting in a shower of phosphorous sparks, released their white smoke swiftly. The moment had come.

Hidden just above the gorge, Mr. Hobbs and his party rushed down the last few hundred yards of the stream bed into the valley; with them, the little gunner party. By the ford, they all split. The signallers and gunners ran towards the area of the command post, disappeared into vehicles and dugouts, reappeared with batteries and, in one case, a reserve wireless left undestroyed when we had evacuated the valley. The group with Mr. Hobbs were loading ammunition with all speed on to their backs. Beyond them, Sergeant-Major Strong selected rations from our forward dump.

Carl thickened up the smoke with another concentration; a few Chinese emerged from the screen along the road to the north, but were destroyed by one of Guido's light machine-guns. Now the expeditionary force was coming back, staggering with their huge loads.

I marvelled at the strength of our South Korean porters. The wooden frames upon their backs—shaped like an "A"—were heaped from waist to head with wooden boxes, crates and jerricans. There was Guy, an unmistakable figure, his cap at a rakish angle on his head. They began the ascent as Carl produced more shells—but this time high explosive.

It was almost as good as Christmas after their return. The slopes below the knoll and behind the saddle were littered with boxes. As I went from dump to dump, I felt like the man who opens his presents and exclaims delightedly: "Just what I wanted!"

Without losing a single man, Mr. Hobbs's

party had brought back enough to relieve our immediate needs.

We checked our newly delivered goods and examined the relative requirements of each element in the force. The ammunition was collected by parties of porters from each company and Frank's mortar troop. The magazines of rifles, Brens and Sten machine-carbines were refilled. Grenades were issued. The Vickers machine-gun sections added a belt or two to their dwindling stocks. There had been no need for ammunition for the medium and heavy mortars; for although we had carried up the barrels to deny them to the enemy, the base plates remained in their pits in the valley. Our defence would be continued with small arms, aided by the support of our guns.

Relief Force Was Battling North

The Colonel now considered what policy we should adopt concerning our vehicles, equipment and stores that remained below. If the Filipinos who were moving north to relieve us should manage to arrive before darkness, there was every prospect that we could go down again to collect what we needed, and send our drivers back with vehicles no longer required, under the protection of the 8th Hussar tanks of the relieving force. Yet we could not bring ourselves to believe that they were going to reach us; the Chinese were so numerous that it seemed incredible that the force would manage to break its way through the numbers that were already miles to the south.

However, no good purpose could be served either by showing a long face to the remainder of the battalion, or by under-estimating the ability of the force attempting to get through. For the moment the Colonel merely wished to know whether or not to bring artillery fire down upon our old headquarters site to destroy it. We called brigade headquarters on the wireless.

It seemed that, by coincidence, Ken had been

about to call us. Throughout the morning and the early afternoon he had reported the progress of the Filipino force. The last news had been encouraging: they had reached a point four miles south of us where, meeting strong resistance, they had been in process of mounting a full-scale attack. The outcome of this was now reported to us: the attack had failed. The Chinese had reinforced the area from Kamak-San. The 8th Hussars had lost some tanks in a road block constructed in one of the gorges, and could get no farther forward that day. That was that.

The Brigadier had just come back to brigade main headquarters from a visit to the Fifth Fusiliers and The Rifles, each of whom were fighting a bitter action against enormous odds. The Belgians had been withdrawn across the river, but with heavy casualties. It appeared that the Chinese were exerting strong pressure in an attempt to force the parallel road to the east of us; and that if they could not have both roads, they would have one or the other. Since leaving the other battalions, he had spoken to both the divisional commander and the corps commander. There was no alternative but to hold on.

Grave Words In A Grave Moment

The Colonel looked down at his map as the Brigadier's voice crackled over the wireless. There was a slight pause after he finished speaking. Then the Colonel put his map on top of the wireless.

"I understand the position quite clearly," he said. "What I must make clear to you is the fact that my command is no longer an effective fighting force. If it is required that we shall stay here, in spite of this, we shall continue to hold. But I wish to make known the nature of my position."

These were grave words for a battalion commander to speak; they were spoken in a grave



Dain and "Recce" Newcombe—at the time of their capture they attacked the besieged battalion in their hundreds



Captain Farrar-Hockley's capture after the Imjin River battle (lower right on map) began his nightmare journeyings in Korea—punctuated by determined efforts to escape

moment. We had fewer than four hundred effective men—and many wounded. Our magazine was low and ten or twelve hours' fighting on a moderate scale would certainly empty it altogether. Many of our weapons had been damaged or smashed, completely beyond repair, by enemy fire—we were especially short of Bren light machine-guns.

Our wireless batteries, thanks to the expedition, might last another twelve or fifteen hours if used sparingly. We could not hope for a further supply of any of these, by air, before mid-morning tomorrow, at the earliest.

Only Ones Who Could Do The Job

I heard the Brigadier's voice in the head-phones again. I could tell by his voice that he did not like committing us to such a desperate task. He said he realized how things stood with us, but the job had to be done; and we were the only ones who could do it. No one else could hope to get through to us that day.

Knowing him, we were at least content with the absolute necessity of what we were to do. And, tomorrow, said the Brigadier, they still planned to send forward the regimental combat team of infantry and armour—perhaps by ten o'clock.

But tomorrow was another day.

The Colonel had gone up to Hill 235 to make a reconnaissance of the positions held now by A Company and the Assault Pioneer Platoon. He had decided to concentrate the whole force on that long, thin ridge for the night.

It was a difficult piece of ground to attack, since the southern approach was precipitous and the northern side extremely steep. Only the ends of the feature, north-west and south-east, favoured attack in strength, and these we could expect to hold through the night without losing ground.

At dusk, when the Chinese could no longer see our movements, we began the march up to the

ridge whose highest point was 235. It was a slow march, for the track was narrow and winding, often steep. The wounded were carried by shifts of men in order to avoid returning to the knoll or saddle for a second journey with equipment. At length, the last man crossed the saddle connecting D Company's hill to our night position and the business of settling-in began.

Taking up a strange position by night is never a pleasant or easy task for a soldier. To do so with one pick and shovel among twenty men in an area at least half of which is solid rock is apt to aggravate the business. In spite of this, there were no complaints; spirits were high as the defence works were constructed, even where the construction involved digging away sharp stones with bayonets and bare hands.

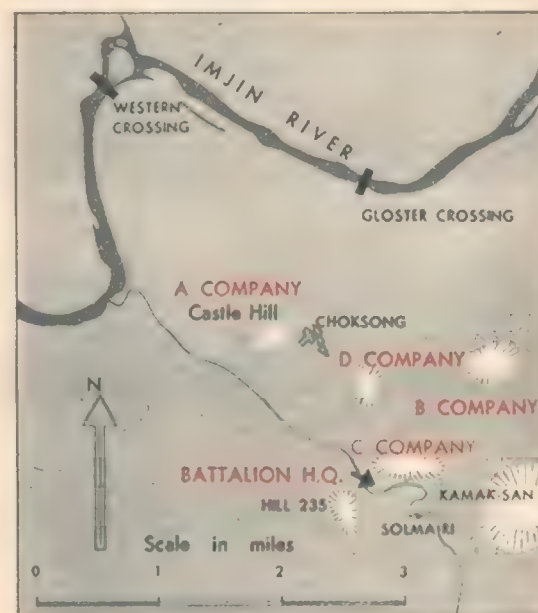
There was no frantic, panic-stricken excavation of trenches: everyone worked steadily throughout the night. Later, a pitifully small ration was issued from the stocks brought up by Mr. Hobbs, Peglar and Sergeant-Major Strong.

The sections each drew lots to see which portion of the rations they should have: tinned rich fruit cake or bully beef, tinned peaches or tinned salmon, half a loaf of bread or a tin of unsweetened milk.

Much of the food was put away until later. Men wanted water rather than food; the heat of the day and the loss of sweat in the march up to the night position had made them thirsty, and there was no water to quench their thirst. We had rationed out a quarter of a pint per man earlier, and sent the remainder to Bob for the wounded, who now lay just south of the ridge crest in a hollow. There were some vacant stretchers there: some of the men had died.

At last there was silence: no sound of battle disturbed the night, the noise of picks and shovels in the rocky earth nearby had ceased. The signallers had dug their trenches. For an hour or so the world pretended to be at peace.

Below me, in a slit trench dug some days



On the eve of battle. The Chinese forded the Imjin at two crossings, gradually driving the Glosters to a gallant last stand on Hill 235

before by Spike's pioneers, the Colonel slept. Behind, in the adjacent trench, slept Guy and Lucas. Biting on the stem of my empty pipe, I began to reflect on the day's events and the coming battle. Gradually, my thoughts drifted and I began to connect my present situation with all the things I had done or seen throughout my life as an infantry soldier. And I remembered, suddenly, the words of a very famous general whose lecture I had attended.

"The infantry," he said, "are the cutting edge of the battle."

If the Eighth Army in Korea was a sword, I knew full well what part of that sword we

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Curtain call

by NINA WARNER HOOKE

ILLUSTRATED BY WYLES

A rich wife could help a struggling playwright.
But not Bob. He meant to succeed alone—or bust

ABOVE ROBERT AMORY'S desk was a written legend: "*Anyone can write a play, but it takes a genius to get it produced.*" His eyes strayed to it now, over the package which contained the returned typescript of his play, *Uncle Mortimer*. The familiar cynicism provoked him to an outburst of pent-up feeling.

"Damn them all. What do they want?" He picked up the letter that had accompanied the typescript, and read it again:

"Dear Bob, I apologize for having kept this so long, but it got mislaid and has only just come to light again after a prolonged and tiresome search. You will appreciate that it is not easy to keep track of all the plays that pour into this office. I have read this one with interest but not, I fear, with sufficient enthusiasm to warrant an offer of production. It seems to me that you are not at your best in light comedy, and would do better to return to serious drama. I therefore await your next exercise in the heavier medium, with the assurance that it will receive every consideration from—Yours sincerely, Everard Hoffmeyer."

After its lengthy sojourn in Hoffmeyer's office, the script was tattered, dirty and dogeared. Robert contemplated it with growing distaste. He also pondered on the thinly veiled implication that it had been presumptuous of him to ask for it back after waiting nine months for a decision, or a word of any sort, from so busy and harassed a man. Well, he had his answer now.

He opened one of the lower drawers of the desk and pulled out another letter from the same source, dated almost exactly a year earlier.

"Dear Bob, I have read *The World My Enemy* with interest. It is in many respects a remarkable play and endorses my opinion that you have a future as a dramatist. But it has not convinced me that psychological drama is your natural forte. Nor, in my view, is this the time for such an essay in despondency. The world needs to laugh. Why do you not turn to good account your obvious gift for satirical wit and imbroglio? Let me hear from you again—and next time send me a drawing-room comedy."

He sighed, replaced this letter and rummaged in the drawer for another one from a different management. He found it and pulled it out on to the desk.

"Dear Mr. Amory, I am returning your play *Driftwood* with regrets for having kept it so long. I am afraid it is not what I am looking for at the present time, though there is much that I like about it. This leads me to ask if by chance you have a historical drama which could be adapted to a big-scale musical production? If so, I should be glad if you would send it to me. We are anxiously looking for a libretto of the romantic kind."

There were many others couched in similar

vein. The drawer was crammed with them. They covered the whole period of eight years since he had left the R.A.F. and embarked on this hopeless Odyssey.

He rose and walked over to the window, but he did not see the rooftops of Mayfair, the tips of the budding plane trees in Park Lane and the green reaches of the park beyond. He was back again in the cockpit of a Catalina, remembering the long hours on ocean patrol when plot after plot, whole sets of characters and passages of dialogue, had bubbled in his mind like working yeast.

He remembered the demob party at which he had announced with epic simplicity and assurance that he was going to be a playwright. He recalled how Jacko Dobson had said: "Well, that's all right, old boy. You can afford it. You've got a rich wife."

He had laughed. The shaft held no sting then.

He had married Virginia on a whirlwind leave from the Middle East. He was twenty-four and so was she. His parents had offered no protest but they had been faintly shocked, as though there were something indecent in the son of a retired merchant captain marrying a society girl with a fortune in her own right.

BUT, fortune or no, he did not intend to let Virginia keep him for the rest of his life. He had brain, talent and ambition—especially ambition. He was going to burst upon the world with the combined effulgence of Robert Sherwood, Priestley and Somerset Maugham. God's gift to the theatre. What a hope!

After the rejection of his first three plays, Robert had tried to get a job, but his pride debarred him from taking advantage of Virginia's connections. Often she had said: "Look, darling, let me ring up old so-and-so—he used to be one of Daddy's cronies. He'd do anything in the world for me."

"It's not the way I want it, don't you understand?"

"Perhaps I don't. Perhaps I'm just being stupid. But honestly I can't see that it matters who pulls the strings."

"It matters to me. Do we have to go all over this again?"

"Not if you don't wish it."

They had not exactly quarrelled, but there had been silences between them. For the rest, they continued to live in her flat. The lease belonged to her and it was easier to stay there than to look for something else. Also, its nearness to the park made it convenient for Nanny and the baby. It was an agreeable place to live, but everything in it was Virginia's and there were times when Robert felt himself to be a kind of privileged lodger.

He was frequently offhand to Nanny and the housekeeper because Virginia paid their wages. There were even times when he looked askance at his daughter Carolyn, as though she, too, were an object in which he had no proprietary rights.

He was aware that this attitude was both



He held out the rejected manuscript. "*Uncle*

unreasonable and absurd, and that it would have been kinder to Virginia and better for their mutual happiness to have accepted her own philosophy.

"Darling, for heaven's sake, what is money? Nothing but dirty little scraps of paper. Who cares where it comes from or who it belongs to? It might just as easily have been yours as mine. It's not as though I ever did anything to earn it. Can't you see?"

No, he couldn't. He tried, as one might valiantly try to swallow a morsel of unpalatable food, but it stuck in his gullet and choked him.

He went into the drawing-room. Virginia was teaching Carolyn to walk, holding her under the arms while the plump little legs lurched and staggered. The baby was absurdly like her, with the same round forehead and clear blue eyes.

He held out the manuscript. "*Uncle Mortimer's come back.*"

She looked up at him over the baby's head. "Oh, darling, not again. Who from?"

"Hoffmeyer."

"Oh, Bob, after all this time. I was beginning to hope—"

"So was I. But it seems the script got mislaid and they've only just found it again. Like



Mortimer's come back." Virginia looked at him over the baby's head. "Oh, Bob," she began. "I was beginning to hope——" He said flatly: "So was I"

to read the letter? It's not without its comic aspect."

"No. Blast Hoffmeyer."

"Amen to that. What do we do now, Jinny—chuck it in the dustbin?"

"The letter?"

"No, the play."

"Don't be silly. It's the best you've written, and you know it. Have you tried Joel Jacobi?"

"Yes. He was the first to see it. I sent it to him—oh, about fifteen months ago."

"That was before he got a controlling interest in the Regency Theatre. He might have been overruled before. Try him again."

"What's the use? I'm sick of it—sick of the endless disappointments. I can't take it any more, Jinny."

VIRGINIA laid the baby on the hearthrug. She straightened up and looked at her husband. It was a long and thoughtful look that took in the stubborn cast of jaw, the anger, the helpless, hurt pride in the dark eyes. All these were familiar to her. But there was something else there now, something that frightened her. It was despair.

She said slowly: "Look, Bob, send that play to Jacobi again. I've got a hunch about it. A

hunch that your luck's on the turn at last."

He managed a wry smile. "It turned long ago," he said. "It went sour."

But he sent the play to Jacobi, all the same.

Three weeks later he emerged from the managerial office of the Regency Theatre with a draft contract in his pocket for the production of *Uncle Mortimer*. He came very carefully down the lushly carpeted staircase into the main vestibule, touching the carved and gilded balustrade as though it were holy. His gait had a curious high-stepping lurch. Anyone watching him would have thought he was drunk. So he was. But not with alcohol.

He stepped out, blinking, into the twilight of a spring evening. Traffic roared and rumbled past him. The sky was sprinkled with early stars. He walked slowly up Shaftesbury Avenue towards Piccadilly Circus. He was not conscious of the hard and dusty pavement underfoot. He walked on a cloud, fleecy and resilient as the swansdown couch of Aphrodite. He walked for miles through the emptying streets, his head ringing with snatches of his conversation with Joel Jacobi.

"Production not later than the beginning of July—height of the London season—opening night a society event. Perfect vehicle for

Madeleine Rickards—wiring New York right away. Ridgeway will produce. Dudley Arbuthnot to do the décor—expensive, but worth it. Congratulate you—most amusing and original theme. Should make a packet for both of us."

At last, at last. His exultation was so huge that it could scarcely be contained in the physical compass of his body. The stars were fierce and close above him. He could have reached up his arms and shaken them down like a million sequins, to make a carpet for a god.

THE intervening months passed in a quickening intensity of preparation. Robert suffered, rejoiced, despaired, according to the prevailing mood of the company. He was constantly in the theatre. Jason Ridgeway, the producer, was a fiery egocentric who bludgeoned his way through obstacles, through tantrums, indifference and outright rebellion, till he had got what he wanted out of management, author and cast.

He had early made it clear to Robert that once the script was finally licked into shape, no interference would be tolerated from the author or anyone else. All the same, Robert continued to watch the daily rehearsals from a seat discreetly far back in the stalls. He sat in quiet

Continued on page 35

Dear Mum
I'm bringing Bob back at
seven. Please do something
delicious with these
wonderful Baked Beans
Love Joan



Boy!
this is tasty

I say Mum —
can I have this for
our Recipe Book?



Mum's Recipe

Boston Baked Beans

1 large can (or two 8-oz. cans) Batchelors Baked Beans
1 level teaspoon dry mustard 1 tablespoon vinegar
1 level tablespoon brown sugar 3-4 bacon rashers

Mix mustard with vinegar, add to Baked Beans. Mix, place in shallow ovenproof dish. Be sure they're Batchelors Beans — only Batchelors are delicious enough! Sprinkle with brown sugar, lay bacon on top. Bake, uncovered, for 20-30 minutes in moderate oven (Mark 5 or 380° F.). Serve hot. Enough for three lucky people.

Change to **Batchelors** wonderful **Baked Beans** — for good!



Assistants watch Raymond at work. He says: "God made a woman's body perfect but for one thing—her hair. I finish off the job He left unfinished"

Raymond of Mayfair, the barber who always knows best

by *DON EVERITT*

"I cannot have women dictating to me. My art would suffer," says the eccentric maestro of hair fashion. That art—and a shrewd sense for business—have reaped him a fortune

ON THE EVE of a Continental tour three years ago, a wealthy American woman visited one of the London salons of Raymond, the hairdresser, and asked for a "new, ravishing style." Raymond himself attended her. He cut her long blonde hair extremely short, and then left senior assistants to wave and curl it. The result—one of the first "poodle cuts" Raymond had tried on a client—pleased him thoroughly. But when the woman saw it she broke down and wept.

Raymond tried briefly to placate her. Then he walked away in disgust. Henry Samuels, an assistant known as Mr. Henry, stayed with the woman. "She cried for an hour and a half," he says. "She said that she dare not leave the

salon. 'What shall I do with my hair?' she kept asking. 'What will people say?' It was useless explaining that Mr. Raymond *always* knows what is best for his clients. But at last we got rid of her."

Two days later, the woman cabled from Brussels, apologizing for her attitude and reporting that everyone admired her hair. On a postcard that followed she wrote: "I am your touring ambassador." Raymond was unimpressed. He says: "I knew the style suited the woman. I knew it would be a success. I had made it artistically perfect."

Giving his clients what he knows is best for

them has been a rewarding formula for Raymond of Mayfair. For nineteen years he has consistently gone his own way, regardless of customers' and competitors' opinions. Today, no other hairdresser has a chain of salons to compare with his. His business has grown since the war from a single establishment employing seventy-five people to four establishments—three in London, one in Bournemouth—employing nearly three hundred and serving more than five hundred women daily. His clients have included the Duchess of Windsor, foreign royalty, "and almost all the women named in Debrett."

The creator of some of the most popular hair styles of recent years, including the page boy, and the urchin and poodle cuts, Raymond says

JOHN BULL PHOTOGRAPHS BY ARTHUR WHITTINGTON



After the war—"my army service was the most horrible part of my life"—Raymond married one of his employees. They have three girls

unhesitatingly that he is the world's best hairdresser. "I have raised hairdressing from common barbering to a level it has not enjoyed for two hundred years."

Knowledgeable men in the business, who have long since found that Raymond has his conceits, say that this one at least is justified. A former champion hairdresser says: "No one can touch him here or on the Continent—which means in the world." William MacDonald, the head of a permanent waving concern, says: "One of Raymond's strong points is that he has always had a sound idea of his value as an artist."

At forty-three Raymond is physically striking; he is broad, deep-chested, and holds himself erect. His tanned face has the rough, leathery complexion of a boxer. A thin black moustache lines his upper lip, and a deep scar crosses his right eyebrow. At the present time, he combs his black hair straight back without a parting.

Raymond uses his surname, Bessone, only when it is legally necessary, and prefers the English pronunciation of his first name. Characteristically, he thrusts it constantly before his customers. His latest salon doors and the arms of his newest chairs are in the shape of the letter R. The letter is also worked into some of the carpeting. He even offers clients "Raymond" cigarettes bearing a symbolic crown and scissors.

"He has the eccentricity of the genius," says a business associate. "You have to *understand* him. He likes to feel foremost in all things. Not long ago, he planned to entertain some Australian friends. He telephoned a restaurant and said: 'I will have a balcony table.' But one could not even be *made* available: all had been booked by equally important customers. Raymond was livid. He told the proprietor he would never enter the restaurant again."

On another occasion, some years ago, Raymond was sitting with a girl friend in a London restaurant when a beautiful blonde came in. At the time, Raymond needed a model, and he sent a waitress to the blonde with a business card bearing the message: "Would you please come

and see me at my salon? I have a proposition which I am sure will be of interest to you."

A minute later, the blonde's escort asked Raymond to step outside. In the street, the man questioned his intentions. Raymond pointed out that his card indicated his business, but the man continued to argue. "I suggested to him that he wanted to indulge in fisticuffs. He agreed that he wanted to teach me a lesson. All-in wrestling was more in my line in those days, so I banged his head on a lamp-post and went back to the restaurant. To my surprise, my friend had gone, and the potential model never came to see me."

A Haircut—At Pistol Point

Raymond's friends have become accustomed to the fact that a great many fabulous things appear to have happened to him. Years ago, there was the woman whose ear lobe he accidentally severed—and stuck back in place without her noticing it. There was the man who ordered him to shave a woman's head—at pistol point. "So many extraordinary incidents happen to Raymond," says a friend, "that it becomes difficult to separate myth from fact."

The fabulous aura surrounding him is not all born of artistic eccentricity. He admits that his ability to publicise himself has played a large part in his success. "As a young man, I watched Antoine of Paris attracting attention with his extraordinary clothing and habits. When I opened my salon in 1936, I knew that my art alone would not at first bring enough custom, so I imitated Antoine. I permanently waved my hair and wore open sandals, highly coloured clothes and bell-sleeved lace blouses. I painted my toe and finger nails, grew a beard and spoke with a husky French accent. I did everything I could think of to attract attention."

After the war—"my army service was the most horrible part of my life"—Raymond reassumed his pose of a dandy. It brought him the publicity and increase in custom he desired. Recently, he has lost much of his personal flamboyance: beard, accent and waves have all gone. "I no longer need them," he says.

Raymond's business ability matches his artistic talent. A leading City stockbroker considers that he is one of the most successful of contemporary businessmen. "Raymond would have made a success of any business," he says. "He has courage."

His Worst Clients—Actresses

Constantly, Raymond has ploughed his profits back into the business. Gilbert Pearce, head of a West End shopfitting firm, says that Raymond has spent £30,000 on new salons in the last three years. In mid-July, Raymond opens another salon in Cardiff. He has already nationally launched the first of several hairdressing preparations. Soon, he intends to break similarly into the cosmetics business.

He combines several traits often found in successful men. He drives himself furiously; he is exacting and omnipotent, and when stirred his temper can flare violently. Gilbert Pearce recalls that when he took Raymond to a newly completed salon, the first thing Raymond noticed were some bits of wire left on a chair. "He played the dickens—got down on his knees to see if the upholstery was scratched."

Even with the customers, Raymond can be temperamental. While he works he frequently hums a nondescript tune. Once, an actress—"actresses are my worst clients"—told him she would rather do without a new hair creation if she had to put up with his humming. Taking her at her word, Raymond walked away.

Unless a client has some really spicy gossip to reveal, Raymond prefers her silence while he works. If a woman chatters ceaselessly, his stock remark is: "Talk is cheap, madam, and money buys houses. Let's get on with it."

He starts to style a woman's hair by examining her face, figure and height. Basically, he

aims "to fill in the valleys of the face and head and smooth out the bumps." He has certain simple laws: a thin face needs width; a wide face needs height. Rarely does he let a client interfere with his work.

Recently, one woman insisted on knowing what he intended to do to her hair. "Madam," he said, "if I tried to explain, you would probably get the wrong idea. You cannot appreciate what a dress looks like until you have put it on. The same rule applies to your hair. If, however, you would prefer some particular style of your own choosing I will get one of my artists to execute it perfectly for you." He said afterwards: "She shut up like a clam and I got on with the job. I cannot have women dictating to me. My art would suffer. Besides, I know what's best for them."

After he has cut the hair—an operation which is the foundation of good hairdressing and of Raymond's talent—he passes the rest of the work over to his assistants. Long ago, he developed his own vocabulary for instructing them. "We will have a teazy-weazy curl here, a mudguard there. . . ."

Kisses For All The Girls

The severe mask which Raymond wears in his salons slides away as soon as he is off-duty. He relaxes, revealing a sense of humour and a wide streak of generosity. He tells stories against himself about his horse-racing and farming failures. Not long ago, he gave his staff a party at Claridge's. At Christmas he gives them chickens, personal presents—and a kiss to all the girls. William MacDonald, who has known Raymond for twenty-five years, says: "There is nothing small about him."

Parents with opposing personalities contributed largely to the formation of Raymond's complex make-up. His father was a hasty-tempered and not particularly successful hairdresser from Nice. His mother, who still lives in France, is a shrewd Norman woman who once successfully ran four hotels.

Raymond Peter Bessone spent most of his boyhood in Rouen. When he was thirteen, his parents left France to live in London. In Soho, his father opened a small hairdresser's shop and told his son to lather the customers' chins, sweep the floor and clean the windows, and taught him how to cut hair. For this, he paid him five shillings a week. After six months, young Bessone rebelled and left home.

In the next few years he gradually worked his way towards Mayfair. At seventeen he got a job at an hotel in the south of France. A year later he returned to Mayfair, and soon afterwards won a hairdressing competition in Paris. MacDonald's, a firm which had just introduced a new permanent waving system, at once hired him to compete for them in London, Paris and Brussels. For five years the MacDonald team walked off with all the big hairdressing trophies. Raymond amassed a fair capital and in 1936 opened his own salon in Grafton Street, Mayfair.

"I Am A Law Unto Myself"

Since the war, Raymond has married. He and his wife, formerly one of his employees, now have three daughters. They live in a large farmhouse at Maidenhead. Apart from his evergreen interest in horse-racing and gambling and his waning interest in farming, Raymond is a keen sportsman. He says: "I play—or have played—football, cricket, polo, hockey and tennis. I ride, I swim, I ski, I shoot. I have passions in life. They come and they go. I am a law unto myself."

Today, refusing to rest on his laurels, Raymond Bessone has no illusions about his value to society generally. "God made a woman's body and He made it perfect but for one thing—the hair. He left the hair unfinished, unattractive; He left it fuzzy or straight, too fine or too coarse, too dry or too greasy. I finish off the job that God left unfinished." THE END

The wonderful people

by DUDLEY BARKER

The blazing train came shrieking out of the night. People in danger, people badly hurt. . . . How could she think of herself at such a moment?

IT WAS DARK when she opened the kitchen door. She stood for a minute to accustom her eyes to the night, and then the familiar shapes hardened out of the blackness. The roof of the barn. The bars of the gate. The shadow of the elm. Into the emptiness of the sky the stars came popping out one by one until, gazing up, she could see a myriad of them.

In the starlight, the fields stretched endlessly away, except where, to the right, there was a blacker line, like a wall. That was the railway embankment. Along there rushed the green engines, trailing scarves across the fields, pulling sleek carriages full of people from one busy city to another. At night, when the last express ran through the darkness, she liked to stand at a

window to watch the lights flashing from its carriages, and get a glimpse of people dining as they sped by, none of them troubling to glance at the lonely house from which she gazed.

But it was not for the express that she was listening tonight, but for the taxi which Fred Jenkins would bring up from the village. She touched with her ankle the suitcase standing in the doorway beside her. He seemed an interminable time coming. The waiting was cruel. She was leaving her husband.

"I'll not stay," she had cried at the peak of the quarrel, "and if I go, I'll never come back."

"All right, go!" he had shouted angrily—he who so rarely shouted. "I've had enough." And

he had slammed off into the little room where he did the farm accounts.

She would go. It was over. In three years since he brought her here as bride, the hopes that had started so high were conquered. Over and over again she had tried to make out why.

There was no one thing; just daily monotony, boredom, the loneliness of this remote place, and Jim's obsession with the farm, trying to make it pay, putting all his thoughts and life into the fields, the stock, feed, prices, weather.

It wearied her, perhaps because she was not country bred, though she had spent most of her twenty-one years there. She had come to the village as a child evacuee when the war started. Then, when a single bomb destroyed the London

Continued on page '36

ILLUSTRATED BY CLIVE UPTON

Judy and the driver stared, paralysed. The roar of the train changed to a fierce howl of metal. The engine careered down the embankment





The Bubble Bounce, one of Belle Vue's newest, dizziest rides. But the best money spinners are the old favourites—the weighing machine and punchball

Bill sees the funny side of the fair

by JOHN ENNIS

To keep things humming in the hurly-burly playground of the north, Bill Ray must be ready for anything—from blowing up a thousand balloons to placating an unhappy giant

ONLY A WEEK BEFORE the season opened this Easter, Bill Ray, the amusements manager at Manchester's Belle Vue, had one of his most popular fairground rides still in pieces after its winter overhaul. Busy preparing other parts of the eighty-three acre pleasure ground for the Good Friday opening, the works manager could spare no men to lay the twenty large slabs of concrete needed as foundations for the ride.

Ray gathered five of his own men—a professional dancer, a motor mechanic, a fairground ride driver, a "Bingo" operator and a rowing-boat attendant. He put on his oldest flannels and a pair of gumboots and began mixing concrete. "First I had to show the others how to use a shovel," he says. "Five days later our

hands were blistered—but the ride was taking money on Good Friday."

A grizzle-haired, energetic forty-two year old, Ray has charge of twenty-one rides, fourteen games, six sideshows and three arcades of automatic machines in Belle Vue, "the playground of the north." His job is to keep the turnstiles clicking throughout a season in which five million people visit Belle Vue, and to work fast when things go wrong on a ride or show that can take £150 a day.

When fine weather at Easter brought 235,000 people in four days, Ray ran the Bingo stall and drove a ride called "The Bug" while the operators had their meals. He once played Sir Walter Raleigh in a pageant when the real actor did not arrive. "The tights were too

tight; I was in agony," he says. In his office he keeps a copy of "If" by Rudyard Kipling—"my bible"—and neatly painted in gold letters on his office door is the slogan, "Never Licked."

One Saturday morning a few years ago Ray was asked if he could inflate a thousand balloons which were to be sent into the air at a fête in the Belle Vue speedway stadium that afternoon. With three other men he took the balloons and some cylinders of hydrogen into a long, low-ceilinged bicycle shed. His idea was to save time by allowing the balloons to float up and gather on the ceiling as they were filled with the gas.

Half an hour before the fête was due to begin, the four men were sweating and dizzy and had bad headaches from the whiffs of gas they had

allowed to escape into their confined working space. The Lord Mayor of Manchester had arrived, and only eight hundred balloons were inflated. Ray asked a fête official how the balloons were to be used, and he was told that forty marching girls were to carry twenty-five balloons each and release them at a signal.

"In my woozy state I had just enough sense left to see a way out," says Ray. He ordered his men to tie the balloons in bundles of twenty. Dead on time, the forty girls each released twenty balloons from the stadium. Ray stayed long enough to make sure that nobody noticed the difference, then staggered home to bed.

"Who's Joyce?" Said His Wife

On another busy day, when Ray took over from his public address system announcer for fifteen minutes, he was given details of five lost children. He scribbled their names and addresses on the back of an envelope and broadcast the location of the room where they would be kept until their parents claimed them. Three weeks later he was sitting in his home when his wife came downstairs and asked: "Who's Joyce Simpkins?"

Ray had no idea. "And Beryl Brown?" his wife asked. "Come on, this had better be good." Emptying his pockets to send his suit to the cleaners, she had found the envelope bearing the lost children's names. "I explained," says Ray, "but I don't think it sounded very convincing."

Besides having to choose, design and even help to erect new sideshows, Ray has to understand the people who run them. Once he had a giant in a sideshow who, cut off from most recreations by his size, seemed to enjoy only one pastime—playing solo whist. "To keep him happy I used to order men who had half an hour to spare to go and play solo with him."

One day a showgirl walked out from a show that was taking £150 a day. Realizing that there were hundreds of pretty girls on the spot, Ray took an electrician into Belle Vue's large ballroom. "I pointed out suitable girls and he made the approach, asking them if they would like a job lying on a table in a flimsy costume being repeatedly sacrificed to an Aztec god."

The first three girls were too shy, but the fourth was willing. Her dancing partner said he would agree if he, too, were given a job. "I put him on the shooting gallery. Next day he was arrested and charged with bigamy."

The Man Behind The Dummy

Years of handling fairground folk, and catering for holidaymakers who have left their inhibitions at home, have given Ray an amused tolerance of human failings. Last winter he unlocked the door of a room full of wax figures that, during the previous season, had been animated by small electric motors for a sideshow. Flashing his torch on a crouching effigy of Robinson Crusoe, he saw a real man hiding behind the dummy. "He was in Belle Vue working for an outside contractor. He had come in down the chimney, hoping to knock off one of the little electric motors—probably to fix to his wife's sewing machine." Ray told the man off and let him go.

When they were on show, the animated waxworks drew large crowds and seemed to invite eccentric behaviour. One day a sailor unscrewed a dummy's leg, and another time a man walked out wearing the crown of the king in the Sleeping Beauty tableau.

As an added piece of showmanship, Ray put a live girl among a group of dummies that represented a nine-piece band. Few people could pick her out. When nobody else was about, a small boy ducked under the barrier to find out what made the dummies work. He chose the live girl, and fled when she asked: "What are you doing?"

On busy days Ray works until midnight, and

walks about twenty miles in the fairground. One night he found the man in charge of the skeeball game struggling with a gang of men who were hurling the heavy balls instead of rolling them, trying to smash his equipment. Ray dashed up shouting: "Never mind them—look at your swag." Another gang of young boys, unnoticed in the scuffle, were helping themselves to the prizes.

"They were all people from travelling fairgrounds, taking the mickey out of Belle Vue," says Ray. "They do it on one day each year, and there is little we can do but grin and bear it."

At one time Ray was also works manager of Belle Vue, but the two jobs became too much for one man. The present works manager, Fred Jenkinson, has to maintain and repair equipment in every section of the grounds, including the zoo.

Some years ago two men from the works department went down a ladder into the bear pit while the bear was in his sleeping den, a cave-like cutting in the side of the pit. Though securely locked, the door of the sleeping den had a few inches of play. As the men began their work, the bear put his paw under the gate and lifted it with a clang. The taller of the two men reached the ladder first. Afterwards he swore that he was carried upwards sitting on the head of the smaller man, without his feet once touching the rungs.

Spieler Who Wanted A Fight

Ray, who began his career at Belle Vue as a boy, believes that the worst job in an amusement park is done by the spielers—the men who try to tempt crowds into sideshows. "I have seen three spielers have minor brainstorms, and we had to cool one off with a bucket of water. It isn't easy to tell the same tale over and over again, from two till eleven, getting no response from forty stony-faced Mancunians."

One evening, after a day of poor business, Ray went round the shows telling the men to close down. One spieler, who had taken nothing for half an hour, chose to blame Ray for wasting his time, and challenged him to fight. Ray, who was wearing a good suit and was about to take out his wife, tried to calm the man, who was much older and no match for him.

"If you don't fight I'll tell all Belle Vue you're yellow," the man yelled. Thinking of the tough fairground men he has to control, Ray had only one choice. "I took off my coat, but before I could move, my face was buried in the ample bosom of the motherly woman from the paybox, while the woman who took the tickets grabbed the spieler. In tears, the two women pleaded with us not to fight. Honour was saved, and we shook hands."

Taking The Alps To Manchester

As well as understanding the quirks of his men, Ray has to know the oddities of the general public. For years the boating lake attracted no customers after 7.30 p.m., but when he put an animated waxwork Hawaiian orchestra on the island in the middle, boys took their girl friends rowing on the lake as late as 10.30 p.m. No matter what modern machines he put in the automatic arcades, the giant weighing machine still takes the most pennies, with the punchball a close second.

Last winter Ray went to Switzerland for a holiday. When he saw the Alps he decided they would make a good model for a new design for one of Belle Vue's oldest rides, the scenic railway. He chipped a piece of rock from the mountainside near Engelberg, from which to copy the colours. With it he packed specimens of Alpine vegetation. Then he bought a musical box in the form of a Swiss chalet; the paybox for the ride, which opened at Whitsun, is copied from it.

"And on the top," he says, "there is an animated wax dummy yodeller." THE END



Amusements manager Bill Ray. His slogan—"Never licked"—is painted above his door at Belle Vue. His "bible" is a copy of Rudyard Kipling's "If"



The girl who is sacrificed to an Aztec god is revived by a cup of tea. Once, when a showgirl quit, Bill hustled up a stand-in from the crowd

CHARTER TO DANGER

by *ELIOT REED*

ILLUSTRATED BY GEORGE DITTON

Who was this girl? And what was scaring her
—so much that she fled at the sight of him?

WHEN ROSS BARNES, an ex-naval officer, advertised his yacht *Roselle* for charter, he hardly expected his first client to be an international financier of the size of Vincent J. Flavius.

Flavius was a legend—a millionaire who hated publicity, whose presence, anywhere in the world, generally meant a merger. Barnes had never met him; the deal had been arranged by Flavius's private secretary, Caton Margobies.

There was a typical air of mystery about it. Barnes was to sail *Roselle* from Portsmouth to Cannes by sea; he was to bring her into port on the sixteenth of the month, between five and six in the evening. Expense was no consideration. . . . Barnes shrugged. A tycoon's whim, he supposed. Well, it would be a nice trip—for himself, his engineer, Tiny Kane, and his nephew, Ralph Peters, just out of school.

At Cannes, leaving Peter and Tiny on board, he went to a café to meet Margobies. But there was no sign of him. Presently a weedy, wry-necked young man came in to telephone, followed by a girl. To his surprise, she knew his name, and tried to tell him something. The wry-necked man intervened roughly; Barnes grappled with him, but he wriggled free and hustled the girl out.

Angry and mystified, Barnes returned to *Roselle*'s mooring. What he found there took his breath away. The mooring was empty. *Roselle* had gone.

Inspector Guizet, of the local police, suggested that the unpredictable Flavius had borrowed her to try her out. He did not take the matter seriously—until next morning, when *Roselle*'s dinghy floated ashore with a dead body in it: the body of Tiny Kane. And there was something else: the mighty Flavius himself had disappeared from his hotel at Juan-les Pins.

Madeleine Blicke, Flavius's secretary, confirmed that the financier had had a meeting, earlier in the evening, with Merle-Florac, a French industrialist staying in the same hotel and a page-boy had seen him leave the hotel at about eight thirty. He had not returned.

There was no news of *Roselle*, or of Ralph Peters. Desperately anxious for the boy's safety, Barnes wandered aimlessly about Cannes. And then he saw the girl—the girl of the café. She crossed the street to avoid him. Quickening his step, he followed her.

PART TWO

The Girl Of The Café

Ross was ten yards behind her, ready to press forward at the right moment, when she turned the corner of a street that led towards the boulevard Carnot. She entered a draper's shop and he paused at the door. It was

a small shop and, as he looked inside, he could see no other doorway. He had got her. It was a matter of waiting now.

He examined her closely as she stood at a counter. She turned towards the street for an instant and he saw in her blue eyes the same troubled look with which she had come to his table in the *Café des Lauriers*.

Two counters ran the length of the shop, and at the rear was a glass-faced cash-desk. Beside the counters were display tables of fancy goods and fabrics. The girl moved slowly, apparently casually, down the shop.

Ross hesitated, biting his lip.

She was right at the back, near the cash-desk now, feeling the texture of some fabric that was draped from a stand.

He hesitated no longer. He walked in. The girl darted across the floor. Then he saw the door in the side wall. He was running before she had it open, but he was too late to reach her. The door slammed behind her. He heard the cries of astonished women and the manager's voice raised in sharp protest.

"Monsieur! Monsieur!"

He sent a bolt of cloth flying as he dodged the manager and hurled himself at the door. He tugged at the handle before he realized that the barrier was held by a spring latch. He turned the small knob and pulled the door open.

Then he was in a narrow alley between two buildings. He ran to the right, towards the street from which he had come. She must have gone that way, and she could be no more than a few yards ahead of him. But when he reached the pavement there was no sign of her, and she had had no time to hide, no time to reach the entrance of another shop.

Desperately he wheeled and ran back along the alley. He had chosen the wrong direction, but, now, surely, he had her trapped in the dead-end at the back of the shop.

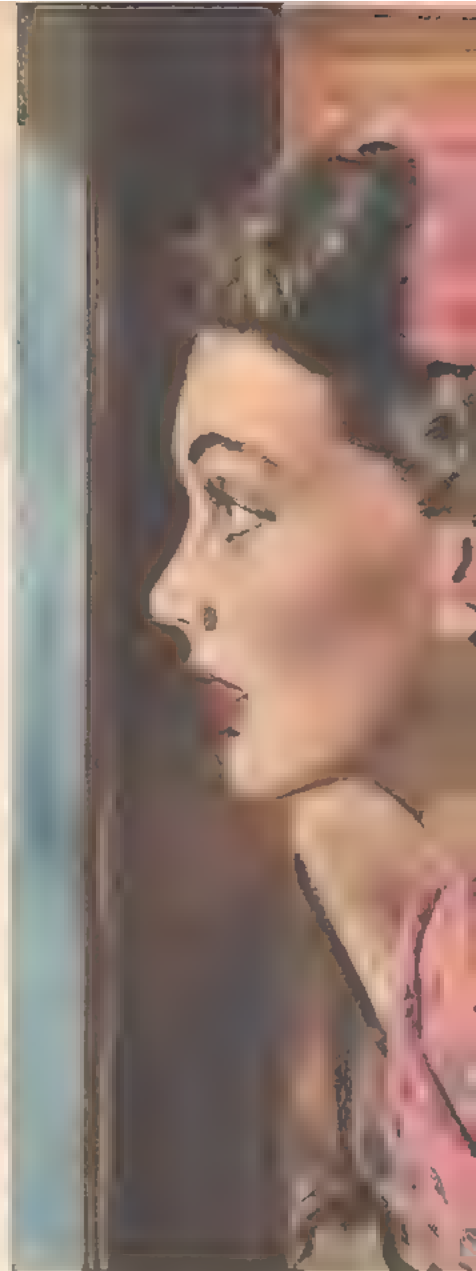
The astonished manager, still protesting, was in his path, but stepped back nimbly into the doorway when the careering lunatic shouted at him violently in a foreign tongue.

"Out of the way!"

Ross ran on. A few paces beyond the door the alley opened into a yard full of empty packing-cases and cartons, but it was no dead-end. A gateway gave on to a lane that was almost blocked by an unattended delivery van. He squeezed past the vehicle, pursued by the manager. He saw a wide street at the end of the lane. When he reached it, she was twenty yards away from him, but all he saw of her was the last swing of her skirt and a glint of nylon as she stepped into a taxi.

"Wait!" he yelled at the driver. "Wait!"

But the cab was moving, trundling with



The girl suddenly darted down the shop towards a

slowly gathering speed towards the boulevard Carnot.

Ross ran after it, desperately, and hopelessly now, only stopping when he reached the wide space before the road bridge over the railway. The taxi bowled along over the bridge and up the boulevard towards Le Cannet, and all Ross had for dubious consolation was a mental note of the number on the rear plate.

Inspector Guizet was not very encouraging. "The driver will be questioned as soon as he returns to his rank or his garage," he said. "But, if this is really the woman you saw in the café, I doubt if she will be driven to the place where she lives."

Ross waited. The report came in with astonishing rapidity, and Guizet was then the first to admit that the fleeing fare had behaved suspiciously.

Her first instruction to the cabby was to take her to Le Cannet and to make all possible speed. She was late for an appointment, she had said, but when barely half the distance had been



side door. Ross hesitated no longer: he was determined she wouldn't escape him this time. Ignoring the manager's protests, he sprinted after her

covered, she told him to take the road to the right across the viaduct and return by the boulevard d'Italie. She said she had forgotten something and must go home, but gave no address. At the corner of the rue de Châteaudun she stopped him and paid him off. That was all he knew.

GUIZET meditated aloud. "Châteaudun? It is certain then that she does not live in that section, if she lives in Cannes at all."

Ross took his own meditations into the sunlight, turning his back on the commissariat. If she lived in Cannes, she would be moving out. It was too small a town. She would not expose herself to the risk of another chance encounter.

Quite oblivious of direction, he wandered aimlessly till he found himself in the rue d'Antibes. A desolate feeling of helplessness and loneliness was on him, and he made his way to a wine bar he had known in the old days. Perhaps he could find Russian Max.

There was no glint of recognition in the

gloomy eyes of the barman. "I am looking for my friend Varenine," Ross said.

"Max le Russe? He comes here no more."

Ross was full of disappointment. "He has left Cannes?"

"He has gone from the Prado. You will find him, no doubt, at the Casino each night, with his latest system."

That was a relief anyway. He grinned. "Still gambling?"

"He flies high, that one. They say he has bought an aeroplane. He no longer buys his wine from me. He has come into money. One day his system worked. Next day he went to Monte Carlo, and still it worked. He came to pay me what he owed . . . fifty-seven litres of *vin rouge*. Then he took his thirst elsewhere. I, you see, was merely an old friend. I gave him to drink when he was dying of a parched gullet. I fed him when he was starving. What do you desire?"

"A glass of red."

He was as thirsty as ever Max had been, and

suddenly tired again. When he had drunk his wine, he went back to the hotel, stretched himself on the bed, and fell into an uneasy sleep.

It was late when he awoke. He phoned the police, but Guizet was not in. An assistant informed him that a plane was bringing a group of investigators from the Sûreté Nationale in Paris, headed by one of the most distinguished officers, Chief Inspector Laurent. The plane was expected at six. Monsieur Barnes must have faith. The great Laurent would soon be on the job.

IT was nearly six. At ten minutes past the hour a cable arrived from London. Ross opened the envelope and read the message:

WIRE IF ANY NEWS. EXPECT LEAVE FOR CANNES TOMORROW. . . . ELEANOR.

He might have foreseen it. He realized only too clearly how distressed she must be about Ralph, but she could do nothing by bringing her sick anxiety to this place. An urgent reply



Ross swung round. In his soft voice, Parra said: "You shouldn't have come here, Mr. Barnes"

was necessary. He walked to the post office and wired her that investigations were progressing and that she must not leave England.

Then he stopped at a small café, and after a simple meal went back to Cannes. He told the clerk at the desk: "If Inspector Guizet telephones, please inform him that I have gone to the Casino, if he wishes to reach me."

It was not yet eight when he arrived at the Casino. In the entrance he halted an attendant. "Does Monsieur Varenine still come here?"

The answer was given without hesitation. Everybody there knew Russian Max. "But he is not here yet, monsieur. He comes a little later."

Ross loitered near the entrance, reading the posters advertising a concert, abstractedly gazing at the photographs. Three gravely smiling singers: Gina Ferrani, Alicia Mars, Raoul Muys.

People were coming in from the Croisette; others were emerging from the restaurant. Ross scanned faces eagerly. At last he was rewarded. Max Varenine came loping towards him.

"Ross! My dear Ross! Ever since I read the news I have been trying to find you!"

MAX embraced him in an emotional Russian way, so he took it that he was not among the forgotten friends.

"I came here to look for you," Ross said. "Old Boileau at the wine shop told me about your good fortune."

"I imagine. I know what the wily scoundrel has been saying. It is poppycock. I won a little money. I invested it. Now I work harder than ever in my life to keep from bankruptcy. But there is time for my affairs. I must know about your catastrophe."

He looked for a quiet place and found it in the foyer, close to the smiling faces of the distinguished opera stars in the showcase.

Ross told his story. Max was sympathetic, but as overwhelmingly vital as he had always been, with the same clamouring impatience that made him cut in with the next question before you could fully answer the last.

"First I must get you out of that hotel," he declared. "Tomorrow you will come to me as my guest. I have a flat, now, with a spare bed. I could not endure that room on the Prado any longer. The bell of the church was ever ringing in my ear. . . ."

Ross was no longer listening. He stared at a photograph in the glazed showcase of the concert artists. He moved towards it, glanced at the name under the picture, then focused on the face as if it were something unbelievable.

"Pardon," Max said. "I babble. The lady is Alicia Mars. Why are you so interested? It is not possible that you know her. She came up from the San Carlo last year for the opera season. Her voice is not so good, but she is very beautiful and acts charmingly. If you wish, I will get

seats for the concert tomorrow night. She will sing—"

Ross felt a hand on his shoulder and swung round.

Inspector Guizet said: "I learned from the hotel that you were here. I am in a hurry, so I have come to fetch you."

"You came at the right moment!" Ross exclaimed excitedly, and he pulled Guizet forward and pointed. "That is the woman of the Café des Lauriers."

"Monsieur Barnes!" The inspector sounded a shade impatient. "I pray that you will not see this woman in every face you encounter. This morning it was somebody in the street. Now. . . ."

"It is the same woman," Ross broke in. "You have only to find her and bring her in."

"There is something more urgent. Chief Inspector Laurent, of the Sûreté, is waiting in the car. We are on the way to the Hotel Marinville, and we wish you to come with us. Monsieur Caton Margolies has returned from Marseille."

"Returned?" Ross stared at him. "How can it be possible if he—"

"That is what we wish to discover." There was a new dryness in Guizet's voice. "He was on the telephone to headquarters the moment he arrived. He started from Marseille before the papers came out with the news. He says he heard nothing till he reached Cannes."

Ross turned to Max Varenine in his bewilderment.

"You had better go at once," Max advised him. "I will call for you at your hotel in the morning."

GUIZET introduced Ross to Chief Inspector Laurent. The man from the Sûreté responded with a stare and an unamiable grunt. He had a heavy, sagging face under a wide-brimmed black hat. When they drew up at the Marinville, Laurent heaved himself out with another grunt and started up the steps as if he wished to dissociate himself from his companions.

The Flavius party had transferred from Juanles-Pins. They were all there, in the suite reserved for their missing employer—Miss Blieke, the secretary; Schuper, the valet; Delbert, the chauffeur.

Miss Blieke was in a bad state of nerves. She looked at the bulky Laurent as if she saw in him something terrifying.

"Mr. Margolies is waiting," she said. "I'll tell him."

A tall, well-built man came from an inner room. He had a young-looking face, but his hair was quite white. Another secretary, perhaps. Ross, keyed up to confront his charterer, felt a sudden let-down. This one had nothing that could be described as elegance. His fingers

were pudgy, his accent strongly American. And he wasted no moment on courtesies.

"It's about time you came," he shot at the group of visitors. "I want to know what you've done and what you're doing. I hope you realize that this is a calamity. I return here to find that my chief has been carried off by a gang of kidnapers. I am not here ten minutes when this is pushed under the door." He waved a sheet of paper.

Madeleine Blieke uttered a cry and keeled over on the carpet in a dead faint.

"Do something, Schuper!" the white-haired man commanded sharply. "Get her to her room. Give him a hand, Delbert. Get water. Get brandy. Get a doctor."

"Yes, Mr. Margolies." The valet jumped to it. "At once, Mr. Margolies."

Ross jumped, too. "Margolies!" he cried. "You are not Margolies!"

"Not Margolies!" The surprised exclamation was accompanied by a movement of the arms that signalled a final despair. "Of course I'm Margolies! Who the devil do you think I am?"

In the silence, Chief Inspector Laurent swivelled his head slightly on his torso and made a small guttural noise. Guizet nodded. "I suspected it," he said. "You have been impersonated, Monsieur Margolies—"

"Never mind that for now," snapped Margolies. "Here is something more urgent."

He flourished the paper again. It was a message made up of words and sometimes individual letters cut from a newspaper and pasted on the sheet. It said:

FLAVIUS IS SAFE. TO KEEP HIM SO, FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS. GET READY A HUNDRED THOUSAND SWISS FRANCS IN THOUSAND-FRANC NOTES AND WAIT.

INSPECTOR GUIZET frowned. "It is curious they do not tell you to keep quiet about it. You are wise, in any case, to let us know."

"I want your advice, naturally. The next note may order me to act alone." Margolies turned to Laurent. "You, I take it, are the officer from Paris?"

Laurent acknowledged himself with a grunt. "What do you think, monsieur?" Margolies demanded.

Laurent spoke for the first time. "I think a hundred thousand Swiss francs is very cheap for a millionaire."

"So we're dealing with a set of cheap crooks."

Laurent made no comment, but raised a heavy hand and tugged at the thin collar under his chin. He was a vast, glum man. Having heard nothing of his prowess, you might have put him down as a prosperous wine merchant struggling with the problems of a provincial *mairie*. Not much hair was left to him. Most of it consisted of a suspiciously lustrous lick that straggled across a shining pate. The face was suety. Small eyes peered from creases in the puff pastry that hid the bone structure, and under a button of a nose the full lips of a narrow mouth seemed eternally pursed between the encroaching folds of the cheeks.

He spoke at last, in a reedy treble. "Why did that woman faint?"

"Miss Blieke? She's highly strung. She's had a nerve-racking day on top of the shock. What do you expect?"

"I expect nothing. I merely observe. You wave a paper, and she drops to the floor. Had she seen the message?"

"No. It was in an envelope addressed to me, marked 'Confidential.' Miss Blieke is entirely trustworthy."

"There has been too much trustfulness already. Monsieur Barnes, here, has been made the victim of his own trustfulness, if his deposition is true. Mr. Flavius walked out of his hotel so trustfully last night, and that seems to me a most peculiar thing."

"Why is it peculiar?"

"We must bear in mind that Monsieur Flavius

Continued on page 25

Jack Williams keeps peril off the rails

by JACK ATTACK

As he paces out the miles, his sharp eyes seek danger along the track. And when an accident happens—he turns detective



"It's the permanent way inspector, not the engine driver, who makes the ride smooth," says Williams. He studies plans for new track

SHORTLY AFTER TWO O'CLOCK on a dark winter morning several years ago, an express parcels train sped towards London from Swansea. Cautioned by a distant signal at Pyle Station, the driver started to brake gently. Then, peering through the darkness for the home signal, he saw a goods train crossing his track.

As the driver of the goods train watched the express bearing down on him, he accelerated in a desperate attempt to avoid it. But he was too late. The express smashed his fifth wagon and ploughed between the sixth and seventh.

Within forty-five minutes of the accident, Jack Williams, permanent way inspector, was hurrying to the site in a breakdown van from Tondur Station, six miles away. It was still dark at four thirty when Williams assessed the damage: a wrecked goods wagon dragged a hundred yards down the track, two other goods wagons half perched on the express engine so that only its smokestack showed, hundreds of feet of twisted track and split sleepers, and freight strewn all along the down line.

After listening to the explanations of the signalman and drivers, Williams started to reconstruct the accident in his mind. He examined the track from the point where the express had run into trouble and—like its driver—he was startled by what he saw.

"Some distance from the home signal," says Williams, "was a stone arch bridge under which the express had to pass. At this point the track curved and I could see that the bank would obscure the home signal from the engine driver's view. What's more, I could see that the bridge would fill up with smoke."

Signal Was Shifted To New Site

In his report to the district engineer, Williams, who was deputizing for another inspector at the time, entered a verdict of bad visibility. The signal was moved to a more practical site.

Though Jack Williams's main job, as one of 107 permanent way inspectors employed by British Railways in the Western Region, is to ensure freight and passenger trains a safe passage by a routine inspection of the tracks, he must also discover what causes accidents. "Some are caused through mechanical faults," he says, "but most are caused by human error."

When the driver of a goods train that had

On Williams and his lonely walks depends the safety of the railway. In sixteen years as an inspector, he has covered over 18,000 miles

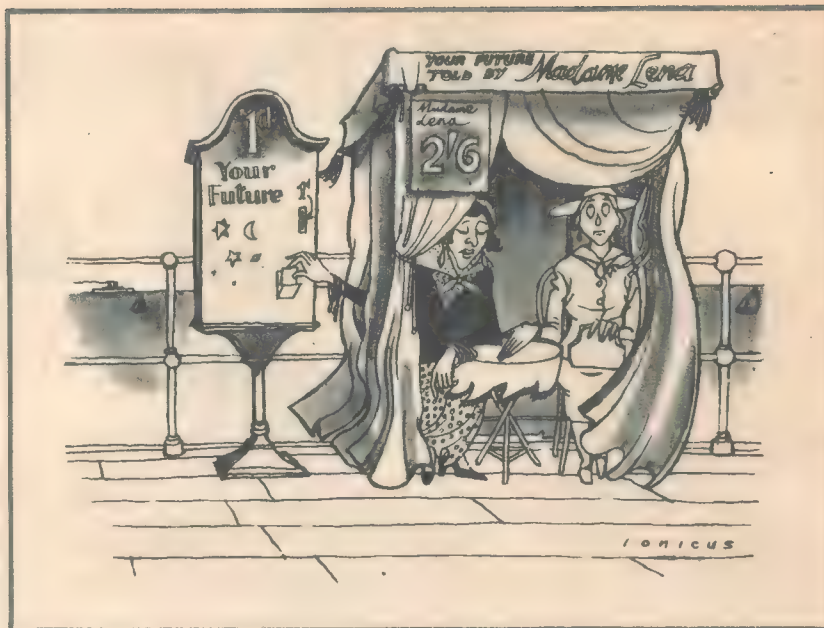
JOHN BULL PHOTOGRAPHS BY LAWRENCE HANLEY





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been put into a loop line realized he was travelling too fast, his fireman jumped out and ran along the line, braking the wagons. But the coupling between the engine and first wagon snapped, the engine continued through the catch points, shot the tracks and landed in a ditch—its wheels to the sky. When Williams examined the tracks he found them covered with heavy dew. "The driver had neglected to put down sand and had skidded off the line."

A hearty, fifty-one year old Gloucestershire man, Jack Williams is now responsible for a hundred miles of track, consisting of a main line between Newport, Monmouthshire, and Blaenavon, and nine branch lines feeding local collieries. In his sixteen years as a permanent way inspector, he has officially walked over 18,000 miles—more than twelve times the distance from Land's End to John o' Groat's and back.

"The job requires a specialized knowledge of the permanent way," he says. "But, above all, it requires an alert mind." Workers have been killed during track inspection, and one man lost his life while carrying a sleeper on his shoulder: it obscured an oncoming train from his view.

"It is the permanent way inspector, not the engine driver, who is responsible for a smooth ride," Williams says. After a three-day rainfall had swollen the Ely river and flooded the valley a few years ago, Williams found a huge tree trunk lying directly across the lines. Quickly, he laid detonators to stop approaching trains.

On another occasion, when he was walking the tracks near Llantrisant, Williams noticed a crack in the bottom of an arch bridge that spanned the river. Two stones had worked loose from the masonry arch. "Below the bridge," he says, "was a sixteen-foot drop."

Goods Wagon Ran Wild

To safeguard the sixty trains that pass over his section every day, Williams looks for such faults as slips in cuttings and embankments, failure of retaining walls, land subsidence under sleepers, landslides, weak bridges, fractured rails, cracked sleepers, broken signals and faulty expansion gaps. He also watches for obstructions such as wandering animals, misplaced wagons, trespassers, stones and fallen trees and branches. In spite of this close inspection, accidents still happen.

After a goods wagon ran wild over the track from Blaengarw to Llangainor and finished at the bottom of a steep embankment, Williams was called on to discover how it had broken away and—more important—how it had got on to the main line. Examining the siding where the wagon had started, Williams found a heap of sand imprinted with the wagon's back wheels.

"It had not been braked properly," he says, "but the sand and gravel which had spilt out of the back of the

wagon during unloading had anchored it. Later, when a member of a construction gang shunted another wagon against it to unload more material, the jolt set the first wagon off."

A talk to the signaller then revealed how the wagon got on to the main line. "At the precise moment that the wagon started down the tracks," Williams says, "a coal train was travelling down an adjacent siding. The signaller turned the points to admit the coal train on to the main line, but the goods wagon entered first. Bumping along, slewing around curves, it steadily gained speed until it hit the catch points four miles down the line and shot off at forty miles an hour."

Mountain On The Move

Because the soil under railway tracks often shifts, Williams has to inspect it regularly. To stabilize softened clay beds, cement grout is pumped into cracks under pressure.

Landslides are a danger to railways in mountainous areas. One branch line was sealed off completely when 100,000 tons of stone and earth rolled down a mountainside in the Ely Valley. "The last train had left only twenty minutes before the whole mountain was on the move."

In emergency cases he has to work fast. After a mountain village was snowbound for four days he had to clear the tracks to admit a train loaded with flour and bread. The drifts on the line were fourteen feet deep and three engines were used to clear a path.

When a goods train loaded with two hundred tons of lime and limestone came into collision with another train, Williams had to reload the freight quickly. "It looked as if it was going to rain. If it had, the lime would have glued up the tracks."

With his staff of eighty-six lengthmen and twelve follow-up men, Williams clears up after derailments.

After a goods train loaded with steel bars and sleepers ran away on a main line, the tracks were so badly twisted that he had to cut the rails loose with acetylene burners.

Impressed by the stories his father told about the building of the Severn Tunnel, Williams joined the Great Western Railway as a relayer in 1921. Today, as a class-two permanent way inspector, he averages £563 a year.

In addition to the permanent way, Williams is responsible for fences and roadways. Defective fencing may allow animals on to the line and, when they are killed, farmers may claim compensation. But Williams caught one farmer out recently after a ganger found a dead ram on the lines. "There wasn't a single wheel mark on it. We chucked it back over the fence, where it had come from in the first place."

On another occasion, when sheep wandered on to the line at Gilfach Goch, Williams found part of the wire fence snapped away. It took him several days to discover how it had happened. "A neighbour had pinched it for his clothes line."

THE END

CHARTER TO DANGER

Continued from page 22

is on the eve of a financial deal involving many millions."

"What do you know about that?" Margolies glared at him.

Laurent's fat hand moved in a lateral sweep of dismissal. "Monsieur Margolies, I am the expert of the Sûreté in cases involving finance." He appeared to look at Margolies for the first time. "Why did you suddenly dash off to Marseille last night?"

"That has nothing to do with the matter."

"No? You went to see Sophocles, leaving your chief to deal with Aristotle. Who are these Greeks?"

"You need not concern yourself with them. The telegram you refer to was simply a business message I sent to Mr. Flavius in a private code. It does not concern the police."

"I have orders to concern myself with the disappearance of Monsieur Flavius," Laurent went on calmly.

"If I identify Monsieur Merle-Florac as Aristotle, I proceed to the conclusion that Sophocles is also an important financier. It appears that a certain Mr. Smith made a hurried trip from London to Marseille yesterday, using a private plane. I think you are aware of his true name, I am. I am also aware that he represents an association of English manufacturers who have an alliance with certain American interests."

"You are not suggesting that such people would be concerned in this outrage?"

"Certainly not. I am merely suggesting that Mr. Smith is the Sophocles of your telegram, and that the attack on Monsieur Flavius is by people of another sort, people who are anxious to put through an international scheme of their own by grabbing the foundations before the ground floor is laid."

"People who demand a ransom of a hundred thousand francs?" Margolies inquired dryly. "If they were after big deals in shares, they wouldn't bother about such chicken feed."

"It's the chicken feed that makes me suspicious." Chief Inspector Laurent blinked his small eyes. "The psychology is very interesting." He stood silent for a moment, and then roused himself.

"You will let me know, Monsieur Margolies, when you receive further instructions. For the moment I have much to do."

He turned to Ross, swivelling his head slowly. "I would like, Monsieur Barnes, to see you in Inspector Guizet's office at ten in the morning. Is it convenient?"

"I shall be there," Ross answered promptly.

At the door, the financial expert of the Sûreté wheeled with the lethal abruptness of a Parthian in retreat. "Please let me know when your Mademoiselle Blicke is quite well, Monsieur Margolies. I wish to see her. Possibly after a night's rest. . . ." He left the room, grunting, without completing the sentence.

WHETHER her night was restful or not, Madeleine Blicke must have been up fairly early in the morning, for she was with Chief Inspector Laurent when Ross arrived at Guizet's office. And it seemed that Miss Blicke had had a long session with Laurent. She had been crying. The signs of it showed in her eyes and also in the state of her make-up.

"That will be all, mademoiselle," Laurent told her in his cold, impersonal treble. "I want you to wait in the next room. When I have had a talk with Monsieur Barnes I will see you again."

"I must go back to the hotel." The girl was on her feet, insisting desperately. "Monsieur Margolies will be waiting for me. I've nothing more to tell you. I've told you a hundred times that I've nothing more to tell you."

"Six times, mademoiselle. Six times. We must be accurate. You have not told me why you went to the

bar in the rue Flaubert and what you did there."

She was suddenly hysterical, hammering on the desk with tightly clenched hands. "I have told you. I wanted a drink."

"Yes. I have a note of it. You ordered a cassis. While you wait in the next room, we will ask the waiter if he remembers it."

"You can't hold me here against my will. You'll account for it. Monsieur Flavius will see that you do. I won't tolerate this outrage."

"The outrage, mademoiselle, was when Monsieur Flavius was kidnapped. You're free to go if you wish to. I merely suggest that you wait. Now be a good girl and get control of yourself."

Guizet shepherded her from the room. Laurent sifted some papers on his desk. "One moment, please, Monsieur Barnes. I must run through your first statement."

He started to run through it. Guizet returned. "She has decided to wait," he announced.

"Naturally." Laurent had been quite certain of it. "The woman is lying. She was up to some mischief in that café. It is useless to frown at me, Inspector. I know how to get the truth from such witnesses. I am overstepping no bounds. It is conscience that applies the torture."

GUIZET went and, with a grunt, Laurent pushed the paper aside and stared at Ross. "Why are you so certain that the boy Ralph is safe?" he demanded.

"Safe? Whoever said I thought he was safe . . . ?" And then it came to him. "You refer to the telegram I sent my sister? What else should I have sent? I knew everything would be in the London papers. I didn't want my sister to go off her head."

"Then it is a lie?"

"No. It is not a lie. Surely it's obvious—"

Laurent interrupted him shrilly. "If it is not a lie, it is the truth. You believe that the boy is safe. You assure the mother that he will soon be returned to you."

"But can't you see I merely wished to ease the shock for her?"

"I see your own words, monsieur."

Laurent hammered and hammered at the point, and Ross began to appreciate what must have happened to Madeleine Blicke.

At last Laurent switched to another point. "Very well, Monsieur Barnes. Let us come to the moment when you left the Café des Lauriers after your fantastic encounter with the woman stranger and her male companion."

Laurent scanned the deposition again, moving a stubby forefinger along the lines of typewriting. Here, in this pause, was the opportunity for Ross to assert that the woman stranger was Alicia Mars, but he did not respond to the cue. It was obvious now that he must tackle Alicia Mars without the intervention of the police, for he was certain that she would freeze before this ponderous monster from the Sûreté.

"You say here," Laurent murmured, "that you left the café in an attempt to overtake the woman. Then, surprisingly, you do not go back to your boat, but adjourn to a restaurant on the rue d'Antibes and eat a leisurely meal. You smoke a cigar, you sip your armagnac and then, having allowed sufficient time for the pirates to seize your craft twice over, you stroll along to the wharf to discover that she is not there!"

Ross was angry. "Are you trying to imply that I knew the craft was going to be used by the kidnapers?"

"I am trying merely to find the explanation of your strangely ready acceptance of a situation that was, at the very least, curious."

"I tell you—"

"You tell me many things. Now, again, Monsieur Barnes. . . ."

The cross-examination went on for an hour or more. Finally, Laurent wheeled back a groaning swivel chair and heaved himself up from the desk.

"Very well. For the time being, I

Sunshine Susie will be called- **THE GOLDEN GIRL!**



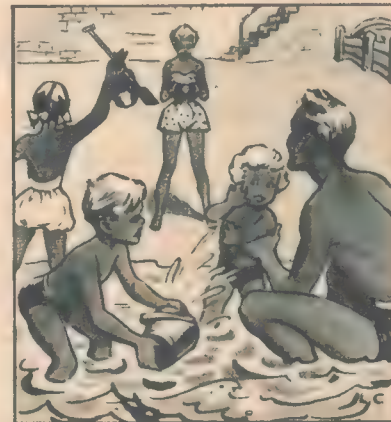
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accept the argument that you were completely duped by this impersonator of Margolies." He touched a bell on the desk. "You will not, on any account, leave Cannes. If you change your hotel, you will be good enough to inform Inspector Guizet."

Exhausted, pale with rage, Ross went. Behind him, the inexhaustible voice was still speaking. "Send in Mademoiselle Bliëke," it said.

Max Varenine was waiting at the hotel to bear him off to his flat. As soon as they arrived, Ross called up Guizet and gave him the address, in the rue des Etats-Unis. "Now you know where to come if you want to arrest me," he added.

"Relax!" Max advised him. "Guizet is a man who does his best. Perhaps this Laurent also has good intentions. It serves no purpose to make them peevish."

Ross tried to relax. The flat was comfortably and handsomely furnished. "I won a modest sum," Max explained. "The mistake I made was to go back to flying. You have heard, perhaps, that I bought a plane, a Morane-Saulnier, a war-surplus bargain. I run pleasure flights for the visitors—over the Estérel and round the Lérins. But this afternoon the joy rides are cancelled. This afternoon you and I will fly in a search for your vessel."

"Max!" Ross could find nothing to add to the name. Excitement and gratitude lifted his spirits.

"Last night I took out the charts. I figured that the crooks must have planned to be in some hiding place before daylight yesterday. It seems to me that Corsica would have been their logical objective."

"It was my own thought, Max."

"But we must not be too hopeful. Perhaps Corsica is too obvious, yet it gives us a starting point. . . . But now I must attend to some business. If you will be ready by one, I will call for you here. Meanwhile, if you wish to look at the map, it is on my desk there."

At three in the afternoon they picked up the Corsican coast just below Calvi and turned southward to begin their circuit. Flying low, Max followed the weaving course set by capes, promontories and headlands, the jagged edging of a fantasy of peaks and pinnacles and the impenetrable green tangle of the maquis.

Whenever he sighted a small craft, he came near to buzzing it to give Ross a close view, but always Ross shook his head. They turned inland when feasible creeks and streams beckoned. They found a motor vessel almost hidden in one such creek. It had familiar lines, but it was not Roselle. The davits were wrong. As they neared Bastia, Max swung out over the sea to take a look at the smaller islands, but there was no reward. When they had completed the flight, Ross knew by the measure of his disappointment how high his hope had been.

Back in the flat, Max urged him not to lose heart. "There are many other places where we must search," he said.

There were too many other places.

And meanwhile there was the concert at the Casino.

They went together. When he saw again the picture of Alicia Mars, Ross was not as confident as he had been. After the street episode of the previous day, it was inconceivable that the girl would present herself before the public, yet there was no printed slip in the programme to indicate that Alicia Mars had backed out of her engagement.

Misgiving continued to grow in him. He was in an agony of suspense as the other woman singer came on to the stage to open the programme with an aria from *Samson and Delilah*.

The programme went on interminably, but at last it was the turn of Alicia Mars.

Ross sat tensely. A small man in a dress suit was stepping forward on the stage. "It is with deep regret that I announce that Mademoiselle Mars is not able to sing tonight, because of a sudden indisposition. . . ."

Max was already on his feet. "You

Consider your verdict

by
RUSSELL SCOTT, LL.B.



IN 1942, William Strathfield and Daisy were married. He was about sixty at the time, a well-liked and comfortably-off member of the local council. His bride was about ten years younger.

They moved into a trim, labour-saving house—entertaining modestly, pottering in the attractive garden, and enjoying a pleasant and peaceful life. In short, it was a successful marriage.

In 1948, William died, leaving all his considerable estate to Daisy. The actual words in his will were ". . . to my wife, Daisy Strathfield. . . ." As it happened, Daisy herself died a year or two afterwards, and left all her property to a nephew named James.

James seemed about to inherit both William's and Daisy's estates when the blow fell. One of William's daughters produced proof that Daisy was already married when she went through a marriage ceremony with William. There was no trace of Daisy's "first" husband—but it was certain that he was alive when the ceremony took place in 1942. The effect was, of

course, to make the Strathfield "marriage" invalid.

William's daughter claimed that Daisy had not been entitled to anything under William's will, on the ground that she did not fill the description or character of "wife" mentioned in it.

Nobody could show whether William had known that Daisy was already married in 1942, and there was no evidence beyond the fact that she was not entitled to marry him then. But it was argued that the words in his will clearly showed that he thought Daisy was his lawful wife, although the law should not allow her or her estate to benefit from his mistake.

James, on behalf of his deceased aunt, said that William obviously meant her to benefit. "His will made the mistake of calling Daisy 'my wife'—but he mentioned her by name, and this clearly shows his intention," said James.

There was no evidence to show that Daisy was fraudulent—and the court in fact assumed that she had no such intention. Therefore, insisted James, she was entitled to the benefit of the doubt.

What is your verdict? For the judge's decision, turn to page 28

were right," he whispered. "Come with me. We will get to the bottom of it."

He knew the small announcer. He insisted on seeing him, and he and Ross were led to a small room backstage.

"Dino, what is the matter with Alicia Mars?" he demanded. "My friend, Monsieur Barnes, is a friend of hers. We expected to see her here tonight."

"So did we." Dino cursed violently in two languages. "She was here yesterday morning for a rehearsal with the accompanist. She was well. She made no complaint. When I went to her dressing-room tonight, just before the concert, she was not there. No one had seen her. I said to myself—"

"We will make inquiries at once, Dino. What is the address?"

Outside the Casino, they hailed a taxi. The driver knew the Villa Cerrito on the boulevard d'Alsace. It was a small house, approached by a few yards of tiled pathway between beds of low shrubs. The owner was

Madame Segal, an American, but not of the more affluent type.

"We have come straight from the Casino," Max announced, and Madame Segal obligingly concluded that the visit was official.

"Oh, dear!" she exclaimed. "I was speaking to your messenger earlier. This is very distressing. I don't know whatever can have happened to Alice. She left here in good time. I would have gone with her, but I had to wait home for my daughter. Alice has been in such a mood all day, as if she didn't know what she was doing. . . ."

So far as Ross could see there was nothing to be done, but Max would not be drawn away. He was curious.

"You have known Mademoiselle Mars a long time?" he asked. "You are very close friends?"

"I have known her, yes." Mrs. Segal hesitated. "It's my daughter, Peggy, and Alice who are close friends. They were at the same music school back home. Peggy could tell you more

about her, really. I don't know. . . ."

"Please go on, madame," Max urged.

But Mrs. Segal had been halted by a thought. She was suddenly suspicious, not of Max and Ross, but of her daughter's friend.

"She really has been strange, the last few days—sort of morose and keeping to herself. Of course, it's none of my business, but I do think she might have confided in me if she has really run off with that man."

"What man?"

"I don't know. I never saw him. I know she was meeting someone, that's all. But if she had to run away, at least she might have kept her engagement first."

"Perhaps she had a good reason." Ross astonished himself by speaking in her defence.

"What reason?" Mrs. Segal was sad about it now. "It's very puzzling. The girl was crazy about her music. She'd give anything for a chance to sing. She was much more serious than Peggy. After music school, she went off to Rome to study, and then she had a season in Naples, but I guess you know about that. We met her again when she came up here last winter, and invited her to live with us. I liked her round the house. She's a sweet girl. . . ."

Ross edged towards the door, and Max took the hint. They were silent as they walked from the Villa Cerrito.

Max said at last: "It looks as if she's slipped into Italy. It might take a year to find her, and by that time Flavius will be dead or ransomed."

"So there is no point in telling the police."

Max turned his head to take a sharp look at his companion.

"Let's get a drink," he suggested.

Ross picked up an evening paper in the café. There was nothing new about the kidnapping. Cables indicated growing excitement and apprehension among financiers in half a dozen countries. The Flavius empire, deprived of its constitutional head, was getting frightened. Caton Margolies had made a reassuring statement, but the ticker tapes were eloquent of anxiety.

They walked back to the flat and Max silently poured drinks.

"You'd better get to bed, Ross," he advised at last. "You look all in. I'll wander along to the port to see what I can pick up. I might get a line on your friend with the twisted neck. Don't wait up for me. I'm likely to be late."

There was no change in the restless Max. Probably he would be gambling somewhere till the small hours. He swallowed his drink and went off.

Ross went to the bathroom to run a hot bath. Before he could turn on the taps, the phone brought him back to the living-room.

The concierge spoke from his switchboard.

"Pardon, Monsieur Barnes, I forgot to tell you when you came in that a lady called early in the evening. She is here again. She is English, I think. Her accent. . . . One moment, monsieur."

Eleanor! In her anxiety for Ralph she must have taken a plane after all. He had telegraphed the name of his hotel. The desk clerk would have given her the new address.

The concierge spoke again. "The lady says it is urgent. She must see you at once."

"Send her up, please."

As he heard the drone of the lift, he flinched at the thought of a painful meeting. He was on the landing when the cage stopped with a clang, and he saw through the metal lattice that the passenger was Alicia Mars.

She was in a state of great agitation, afraid to face him now that it was too late for retreat.

He saw her very clearly in the light from the top of the cage, observing every detail of her appearance in the first instant. A large-sleeved coat of a smooth, dark material hung loosely, cloak-like, from her shoulders, and when she moved it swung open, revealing a dark tailored suit with jacket

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buttoned over a white blouse. Under the light he saw the gleam of a black velvet cap and the glint of bronze in the lustrous waves of her dark hair.

She stood gazing at him for a long moment. Then, opening the gate, he took her arm and she stepped out of the lift.

"You are wondering why I am here," she said.

"Come inside." He shepherded her into the flat, and took her coat. She appeared nerveless, almost in a trance.

"Now," he said.

"Now—" The girl looked at him. "I am putting myself in your hands. Two nights ago, in the Café des Lauriers, I tried to help you. It was not for your sake, but I'm hoping that you will remember it, because tonight I want you to help me."

"I've been trying to find you," he told her. "I went to the Casino tonight. Then to the Villa Cerrito. Why didn't you go to the Casino for the concert?"

"I was in fear of what might happen. I had some wild idea of running away. I still have, but I'm in your hands. You can phone the police if you wish. They can't do much to me but make me talk. If you'll listen to me first there might be some way out. I don't know."

THEY had been standing awkwardly near the doorway of the living-room. He made her sit down; he seated himself.

"It is not for myself," she said. "It's for my brother. You saw him in the café with me. He's my half-brother, really. I tried to break up the thing that night. I thought if you were warned in time you might interfere. I didn't know then how horrible it was going to be."

She hesitated. "I'm not going to soften things," she went on. "I want to explain. He was badly smashed up in the war. That changed him. He didn't go back home. He disappeared. I found him after a lot of trouble. In Milan. He was tied up with a group who were working some financial swindle. Petty. I got him out of it, but he wouldn't go straight. There was one man who seemed to have a hold over him: Alvaro Parra. You knew him in England as Margolies." Ross had wondered about her purpose, had opened his mouth to question her story. He stopped abruptly.

"I don't wonder that Parra deceived you," she said. "He could impose on anybody. I thought myself that he was a trustworthy friend. He used to talk to me of music, as if it were the one thing he cared about. He does care, but he uses that and everything else as stock in trade. He is a sharper, a confidence man, ready for any shady deal if the money is good enough. My brother used to tell me that he was harmless. I know now how dangerous he is."

"You mean that he organized the whole of this Flavius business?"

"I think in the first place he was hired. I don't know by whom. I don't know the purpose, except that there is some sort of business struggle against Flavius. I knew your vessel was going to be used. I found that out by accident. I tried to get my brother out of it, but he wouldn't listen. He said it was harmless. That was always his word. They were going to take this American millionaire for a sea trip, and they were all going to make their fortunes. . . ."

She had been staring at the carpet. Now she met Ross's gaze. "I couldn't go to the police and inform against my brother. When you saw me in the street yesterday, I wasn't aware of all that had happened. I didn't know a man had been murdered until I saw the afternoon papers. I had a great fear then that there would be more murder. And I knew that you must have given descriptions of us to the police. I found my brother in terror. I talked to him and argued and pleaded. In the end he agreed that we must help you to find your vessel. That way we thought you might be able to help us."

"How can I help you?" Ross rose

from his seat and stood in front of her.

"You are the only one who could give evidence against us. But, if it became necessary, you could say we were not the two you saw in the Café des Lauriers."

He turned in agitation and walked to the window. "The police are already satisfied that Alicia Mars was not the woman," he said.

"I'm not concerned for myself," she answered. "I want to save my brother. He will see you tonight. He will tell you all he knows. He will make a written statement and mail it to the police, or to yourself, if you wish. It will be unsigned, but it will be the truth. By the time it is delivered, he will be in Italy, if he is lucky. If he is held at Vintimille, you will say he is not the man."

Ross stood at the window, silent.

"If you cannot agree," she said desperately, "there is nothing more I can do. I have no knowledge myself. My brother will wait till eleven thirty. After that he will try to reach Italy."

"Where is he now?"

"If you will give me your word, I will tell you."

In the silence, he heard the drone of the lift coming up.

"Very well. I give you my word."

She said: "Above the Café des Lauriers the street turns to the left. Higher up the hill there is a small alley, the rue Tunis. The house is number nine and the room is on the top floor. You will find the name on the door. He calls himself Jean Seyrac."

The droning of the lift came to an end with a clang and a clatter outside the flat door. Then a key rattled in the latch, and Max Varenine came in.

He did not see the girl at once. He was too full of what he had to say. "I've news, Ross, the port is full of it. Your Roselle has been picked up by a French naval vessel twelve miles north-east of Minorca. They're bringing her into Cannes."

Ross had one thought. "Ralph?"

Max shook his head. "Not a soul on board," he said. "They found her drifting, derelict." Suddenly he saw the girl. "What the—!"

"Look after her, Max," Ross said harshly. "Keep her here."

"Where are you going?"

"I can't explain. It's an appointment I must keep. It's a bargain. I shan't be long."

"But look here. . . ."

"Goodbye."

HE had no great distance to go. When he reached the Allées he ran, and in another minute he was hurrying up the steep ways of the Suquet.

The rue Tunis was a dark and dismal alley, a mere passage in the remoter burrows of the old town. He found the house. The door opened when he turned the handle. A small bulb burned dimly in the narrow hall, disclosing at the rear a narrower staircase.

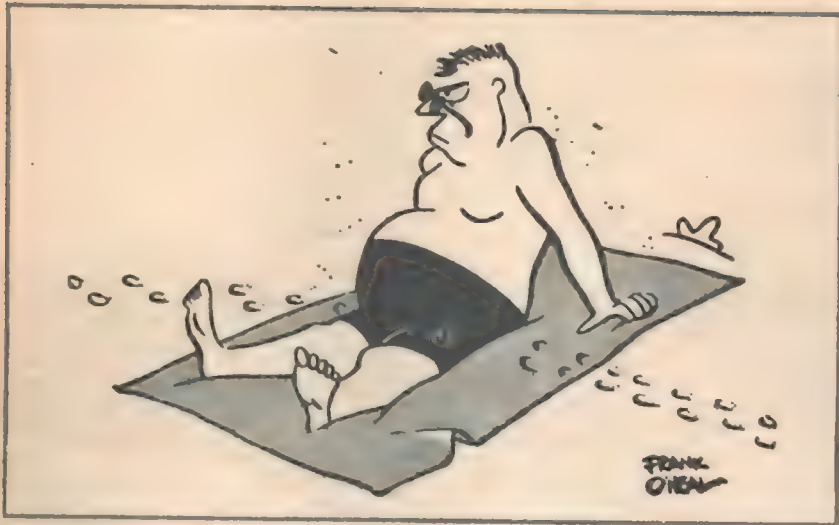
When he reached the top floor he struck a match and saw the name of Jean Seyrac on a card pinned to one of the doors.

He rapped on the door. He rapped again. He tried the handle. The door opened.

He felt along the wall for a switch and found it. The room sprang up out of the darkness. A mean room with shabby furniture—a single bed with a painted iron frame, a grimy rep curtain of lime green slung unevenly from a triangular board to serve as a corner wardrobe, a chipped and battered

Consider your verdict

IN the case on page 26, the judge said that although there was a misdescription in the will, the court could not upset its terms in such circumstances unless there was evidence of fraudulent intent on the part of the "wife." There was no fraud here, so Daisy's estate was entitled to William's property. (This is the probable verdict, based on actual cases.)



chest of drawers, a broken-backed chair, bare boards, a neat suitcase.

Ross stared at the bed. There was something heaped on it under a stained pink counterpane.

"Seyrac!" he called quietly.

Silence. Ross backed into the doorway. Fear was like a tangible thing that came between him and the bed. He forced himself to go across to the bed. He lifted the counterpane.

It was Jean Seyrac all right. The wry neck was twisted more grotesquely and round it was knotted a length of green picture cord. Jean Seyrac was not going to Italy tonight.

A sudden sound of movement made Ross wheel from the body on the bed. The lime green curtain of the corner wardrobe was being pulled aside. Alvaro Parra stepped into the room.

"You shouldn't have come here, Mr. Barnes," Parra said in his nicely modulated voice. "It was not wise of you. Not wise at all."

Ross saw the muzzle of a small, short-barrelled revolver, and the long, slender fingers of the musician's hand looked as if they understood this instrument. One of them brought a caressive touch to the trigger. "I thought I had created enough difficulty for you," Parra said. "I know your feeling for me is not very friendly, and now I'm afraid you will force me to aggravate it. I don't like to do that. I'm a reasonable man. I wish always to deal with reasonable men."

"Seyrac, I suppose, was unreasonable? And Kane?" The pistol might hold Ross from action but it could not control his anger. "What have you done with Ralph Peters? Where is he? If you've murdered him as you've murdered Seyrac, you'll pay for it."

Parra's free hand described a slight gesture of deprecation. "Mr. Barnes, I beg you to consider. Seyrac was not a gentleman. It is not the act of a gentleman to talk about one's friends when an association is on a strictly confidential basis. You will appreciate that your presence here supports the argument. . . ."

"So he dies with a strangler's cord round his neck! You damned thug! First Kane, and now this fellow!"

"It seems that you are determined to be rude," Parra shook his head slowly. "Kane's was altogether a different case, a grave error of social taste. He was trying to get ashore. He had to be restrained, with ropes. Unfortunately for himself, he broke free at a most inconvenient moment. We had just embarked a most important guest and the dinghy was riding astern. Kane seized the dinghy and started to row."

Parra came forward a step.

"Now our programme was worked out on an exact consideration of time, Mr. Barnes. We could not, you understand, risk an early alarm and the almost certain sequel of a night pursuit. Kane had to be stopped."

Let the fellow talk, Barnes told himself. Even play up to him in the hope that he might relax for a moment. It was the moment that Ross must seize, if it came, and he tried to prepare himself. Anger was no asset. His

life depended on his complete control of himself, for he believed that Parra meant to kill him. Parra would shoot, if necessary. But Parra was cautious. He would avoid noise if he could. He preferred the silence of the green cord.

"You see how it is," Parra gestured again with his free hand. "Everything is planned beyond error, and you have been unwise, Mr. Barnes, to entertain any thought of intervention."

Ross said quietly: "What have you done with Ralph Peters?"

Parra smiled. "He is a very nice boy, Ralph Peters. If he behaves himself, nothing will happen to him."

"Where is he?"

"I imagine he must be with Mr. Flavius. That's a possibility, don't you think?"

Parra was amused. The pistol wavered. Ross decided that this was not the moment. He edged nearer, watching the trigger finger.

"You ask for too much information, Mr. Barnes," Parra said. "I would like a little from you, before we end this unfortunate interview. I want to know if Mr. Margolies has received any demand for ransom money."

"If a demand has been made, you must have made it."

"Please answer my question, Mr. Barnes—or the consequences may be unfortunate for your nephew."

Ross answered him.

"A hundred thousand Swiss francs!" Parra smiled one of his very nice smiles. "That is a small price indeed to put on the head of the fabulous Mr. Flavius. And the old trick with scissors and paste and newspapers! Dear me!"

Ross could only think that here was the moment. In a gesture that might have been one of appeal, Parra moved the gun. More than this, his gaze shifted slightly as though something behind Ross had distracted him.

Bunching his knuckles for the blow, Ross sprang. He swung his fist from the hip, but he was not quick enough.

Parra swayed. It was a flinching rather than a deliberate movement.

Ross caught him on the side of the jaw, not on the vital point. The fellow staggered back and Ross followed swiftly, closing with him, grasping at the pistol hand. Parra was dazed, almost helpless. Ross bore him violently against the far wall and the revolver clattered on the bare floorboards. Then there was a shuffling sound behind him and he knew why Parra's gaze had shifted. Before he could turn to see the man who had come into the room, something as heavy as a monument and as hard as a battleship hit him behind the right ear.

He went down on his knees and pitched forward on his face. He was paralysed, blind with pain, but still conscious. Another blow seemed to split his head into whirling particles.

He heard a voice whispering from some far distant point, low, almost lost, yet giving venomous bite to the words.

"Don't kill him, you fool! I want him alive!"

That was all.

To be continued next week

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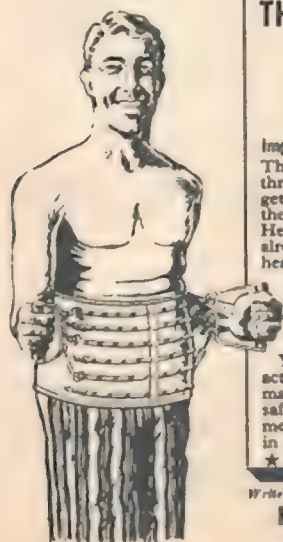
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THE EDGE OF THE SWORD

Continued from page 11

helped to form: the edge of the sword. Half-sitting and half-lying by the slit-trench parapet on that sharp ridge, the stars shining down on me through the white clouds, it seemed to me that it was not a bad description of our job: the cutting edge of the sword. . . .

The bugles awakened me. Some time before, the Colonel had risen and insisted that I get some sleep. He had taken my place by the parapet, and I had taken his. Now, sitting up to throw off the effects of my deep sleep, I heard the bugles again; not the pleasant, familiar note of our own bugles, but something akin to that of a cavalry trumpet. They were playing a call which, if not exactly familiar to me, was nonetheless plain in its meaning. It was after ten o'clock: the attack had begun.

In Shallow Trenches

On the south-eastern end of the ridge, Denis's company and Frank's mortar troop were engaged by frequent assaults and a good deal of machine-gun fire that was uncomfortable in view of the shallowness of their trenches, most of which had been driven down only a few feet on to solid rock.

In the north west, A Company were mainly engaged in fighting for a small feature a little forward of Point 235; a mound covered with trees and scrub. Here, Donald had forgotten that he was the assistant adjutant and was commanding seventeen men—in name, a platoon—who were hanging on by little more than the skin of their teeth.

The G.S.O. 3 came on the wireless for me. He wanted to tell me that the air transport sorties would be flown some time after nine o'clock: had we any means of marking a dropping zone? We agreed on smoke markers to save further discussion.

In addition to the news about the supply drop there was another cheering item: we had a promise of substantial offensive air support once daylight came. How I had wished during the past two days for a squadron—even a flight—of F 80s! Whatever happened today, we should give a really good account of ourselves.

The bugles were sounding again.

"It'll be a long time before I want to hear a cavalry trumpet playing, after this," said the Colonel.

"It would serve them right, sir," I said, "if we confused them by playing our own bugles. I wonder which direction they'd go if they heard 'Defaulters' played?"

Called For A Bugle

I was half joking, but the Colonel took me seriously. "Have we got a bugle up here?" he asked. It appeared that we had; for when I called down the slope to the east, the drum-major's voice replied through the bare, scattered trees: "Got one in my haversack, sir."

"Well, play it, Drum-Major."

But it was no good telling the drum-major just to "play." He was an experienced man and, in barrack routine, he knew exactly what should be played and when. On special occasions, he expected to receive instructions from the adjutant, quite rightly; and this was undoubtedly a special occasion.

"It's getting on towards daylight," I called back to him. "Play 'Reveille'—the Long and the Short. And play 'Fire Call.' In fact, play all the calls of the day as far as 'Retreat'—but don't play that!"

A little way below us in the darkness I heard a few preliminary "peeps" as the drum-major warmed his instrument up. This was followed by a rattle of stones as he climbed from his slit-trench to sound the calls; for the idea of playing his bugle under cover in a slit-trench was beyond him.

He always played a bugle well; that day he was not below form. The sweet notes of our own bugle, which now echoed through the valley below him, died away. For a moment, there was silence—the last note had coincided with a lull in action. Then the noise of battle began again—but with a difference: there was no sound of a

Chinese bugle. There are not many drum-majors in the British Army who can claim to have silenced the enemy's battle calls with a short bugle recital.

★ ★ ★

It is morning. Beyond Hill 235 a sudden rush has driven back Donald's little group. They withdraw under heavy mortar fire which intensifies as they reach the top of Point 235. The air is black with mortar smoke; it seems as if a huge, dark screen has been dropped across the top of the hill.

Men come staggering back from Terry's position: eleven men, wounded, come reeling back, their senses bemused by shock and injury. The face of one man has been laid open by a splinter of metal; another's arm is hanging limply by his side, the bone smashed.

Sergeant Pugh has been wounded in the shoulder, but he has refused to go back and is helping to reorganize the position. Two men are carrying Terry back; he is unconscious from a head wound. They lay him down in a slit-trench and one of the medical orderlies begins to bandage him.

Donald is coming down the hill. He is wounded in the shoulder and there is a gash on his forehead. His face is pale and drawn; it is plain that he is about to faint.

Now there are two of us to lead A Company: Jumbo and me—there is nothing for me to do at battalion headquarters just now. Here we are, the two of us, and the gallant little body of A Company that has had two such nights of battle as I have never seen before.

We have been pushed off the little feature, which is not so serious; and we have been pushed off Point 235—which is. So we must go back to it. And we must go back now before they have time to invest it in real strength; for if they secure the height absolutely, the flood gates will have been opened and the waters will pour in upon the battalion position, no matter how well the bottom gate is held by Frank and Denis.

And D Company, farther down the slope, will be washed away with support company and battalion headquarters.

Friends In A Corner

I look round the small body of men in the trenches. Some of them are young men, hardly more than boys; some of them men in their late thirties; most of them are somewhere in between. I see that it is a good lot of faces to be in a tight corner with, reliable faces, the faces of old friends.

After a minute or two we are all able to manage a smile; even young Fish, with a half-dozen pieces of metal inside his fair head. When I see that smile, I know we are ready to go.

The top is thirty yards away. The scarred red earth flies beneath our feet, our weapons are firing, we are on them, they go back, the hill is ours: it is as easy as that. We jump into the trenches that they occupied so recently and turn our attention to securing what we have regained.

Half right, the scrub and trees of the small feature are alive with enemy; we may have to make a sortie to clear that.

To our front, the hill drops away in a long, gentle slope down to the valley below Castle Hill. There is good cover here for the enemy: dwarf oaks and a group of pine trees are on either side of the track running north. We shall have to maintain a careful watch on this approach.

Nearer, for the first twenty yards along the track from my trench, the ground has been cleared—perhaps long ago by Spike's pioneers. Two felled trees lie across the track, at right angles to it.

Left, the side of the ridge drops steeply to the western valley: Clayden must see that we are not surprised from this direction.

Only the extreme right flank is secure. Here Tom's platoon of D Company are ready and waiting to give us fire support with their Brens. There can be no doubt as to what they can do: there are six dead Chinese on the



"No, sir. You haven't quite got a winner here. The hoop must be right . . . down . . . so"

right flank, caught by Tom's lads as they ran after our assault on the hill.

Clayden moves a little way over the edge of the ridge, towards the western valley. He can see the whole way down the slope from here very nicely, and he remains within voice range. Tuggey moves up farther on the right flank so that he can engage the whole of the small feature. Middleton and two of the others move to different trenches. Everyone now has an arc to watch and to shoot in: the arcs overlap: our front is covered with potential fire. It is time for a smoke break. . . .

Now Ronnie has come doubling over the crest of the hill. He can spare me some artillery fire if I need it just now. He has just finished a shoot for Denis. I accept his offer enthusiastically. They are going to come straight up the track at any minute; but we can deal with that party. The area I want sorted out is the small feature.

"Well," says Ronnie, "it'll mean dropping them a bit short. Are you prepared to accept 'unders'?"

Willing To Take Risk

We certainly are. For the sake of neutralizing that wretched feature we'll accept as many "unders" as he likes. Ronnie goes back to his wireless set; I can see that his sense of propriety as a gunner prevents him from being quite satisfied. Obviously, the gun position thinks the same way for, a minute or so later, I get a hail from Jumbo.

"The gunners say that you'll have to be prepared to accept 'unders'."

Good heavens, Recce dropped lots of "unders" on himself yesterday. What are they so worried about today?

They will have to get a move on with the shoot; the Chinese are coming. Yellow faces appear among the pine trees and the dwarf oaks. A machine-gun is firing thirty yards away from that damned small mound: it has killed a man to my right. At any minute they will rush forward.

Ah! There is a whistling in the air. We all duck into our trenches. The sky darkens; the whole ground is shaking with the noise of explosions. The gunners are doing us proud. I lie on the bottom of my slit-trench, covered with earth blown in by the bursting shells. A peculiar black-and-orange beetle is crawling unaffectedly up the wall of the trench.

Another minute passes, and it is quiet. I kneel up to shake off the loose earth. What a wonderful sight! Not a Chinese in view; and the small feature is simply pitted with shell craters. Marvellous chaps, these gunners.

Someone is throwing grenades; and

they are throwing them at us. Here comes another one: a small, dark object against the background of the blue sky, its wooden handle turning over and over as it begins the descent on to our positions. It falls near Master's slit-trench; he ducks for a moment as it explodes. We begin to scan our immediate front closely for the source of this annoyance.

From the direction of their flight, it would seem that all the grenades have come from a single point somewhere along the track that runs away from us down the north-western end of the feature. Yet this ground is entirely open immediately in front of us.

Unless they are standing up—which would seem unlikely—they must have prodigious strength to throw from the cover some way down the track. Surely it cannot be from there.

We continue to watch. Another grenade rises suddenly into the air. Ah, the trees—the felled trees: one or two very small men must have remained behind after the last attack upon our positions and concealed themselves by pressing their bodies right up against the trunks.

It is from there, less than fifteen yards away, that they have been throwing their grenades at us. Three of us draw the pins from our Mills grenades, three arms draw back for the throw, three arms come up and over.

We take cover as the grenades drop to the ground just beyond the tree trunk where we suspect the enemy lies. There is a flash, two more follow in quick succession; the three explosions blend into one mighty roar.

Life Pouring Away

From behind the tree trunk, two figures appear; two little cotton-clad men in their teacup-shaped steel helmets garnished with scraps of scrub and dwarf-oak branches. One of them is unable to run; already he has fallen back, the life blood pouring through the back of his jacket. The other is uninjured by the grenades and runs desperately for cover.

Ten yards from the tree trunk which concealed him, he is spun round by a burst of fire from a Sten machine-gun and flung, lifeless, to the ground. The incident is over.

The sun is rising high in the sky, and we are still on the hill. Apart from the small feature, half right—Donald's mound—we have not lost a foot of ground in spite of repeated assaults on our positions.

The Colonel doubles across the slope behind me and drops into my trench. "We've got some air support at

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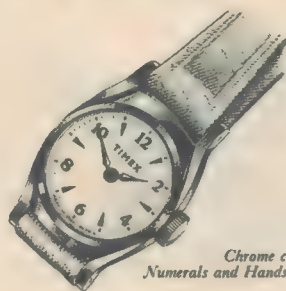
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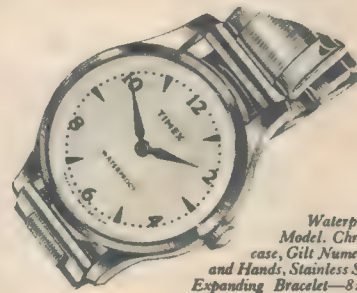
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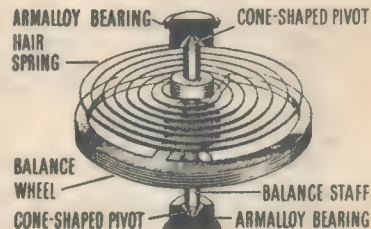


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"I dropped a pill here and there on the floor, and after that it was no trouble getting him to take his medicine"

last," he says. "From what the air observer says they're massing to attack your positions now. Let me know where you want the air strike and I'll call them down."

We do not need glasses to survey this ground: it is close battle. I show him the main points from which I believe they will mount their attack and agree on a means of marking our own positions.

We are going to need that air strike quickly. We are engaged in a fire-fight with two machine-guns on the mound; another is firing indirectly from behind the brow of the hill right in front of us. Several parties have tried to draw our fire and they have been too large to be permitted to come nearer than thirty yards.

At any moment, more than a hundred Chinese soldiers, armed with rifles and machine-carbines, will come out of the scrub to our front and rush upon us. We are familiar with their tactics.

This time, however, there is a difference in the circumstances under which we await them: our ammunition is practically exhausted. The solution to our problem may lie in the grenade on the edge of my trench—a grenade which will release a great cloud of violet-coloured smoke when I throw it forward. But there is only one of these grenades. I must judge the moment carefully or we shall be under fire of our own aircraft as well as that from the Chinese.

High above us, their silver wings shining in the sunlight, the Shooting Star jets—F 80s—circle before making their run-in. The flight leader is already turning to begin the air strike.

I unscrew the black bakelite cap of the grenade, half unwind the tape and throw it up into the air with all my might. It lands beyond the tree trunks on the path in a dense cloud, then spreads across the ridge, obscuring the mound, the track and the dwarf oaks from our view.

Raging Mass Of Flame

There is a shout from the rear; a distant whine grows to a deafening high-pitched scream; a great, tumbling wave of air descends on the position, forcing the red dust up all around us in a choking cloud; I retain an impression of a silver object that appears and, in the same instant, disappears.

In passing, the jets have dispersed the violet marker smoke except for a single tentacle that hangs in the air to the left of the track. Our eyes do not linger on this. Forward, where the dwarf oaks and pines stood, there is a raging mass of flame, still rising, still spreading, from the napalm tanks the planes have dropped. There will be no attack from this direction for a time; and the men who lay in readiness beneath the cover of the oaks will never rise to make their charge.

The aircraft make a second run. This time we are less concerned with

watching the enemy and see, in the brief moment that they pass over us, that they fly across the mound.

As they reach us they release two aluminium tanks, and these descend upon the rear approaches to the mound. They are napalm tanks; ignited, the jellied gasoline bursts out and up into a great sheet of yellow flame, consuming everything that it envelops. Now it is the turn of the mound itself. On the third run the jets drop their tanks early, before they reach us, and on to the very area from which the enemy machine-guns were firing. They fire no longer.

The Colonel Was Calm

I was pondering over all this when I got a hail from Sergeant-Major Gallagher.

"You're wanted at battalion headquarters, sir," he called. I told Sergeant Tuggey to take charge and ran back across the hilltop.

The Colonel was sitting by himself below the rear-link set, looking at his map. He stood up as I approached, looking so completely calm that I had no idea of the importance of his news.

"You know the armoured infantry column that's coming up from 3 Div to relieve us?" he said.

"Yes, sir."

"Well, it isn't coming."

I said, "Right, sir." There did not seem to be much else to say.

The Colonel continued with all the news he had to that moment. It appeared that the Chinese were now pressing so hard to the east that the relief column intended for us would be required to cover the withdrawal of the division through Uijong-bu, below which the new defence line was being established. Our commitment was at an end; in a short time, under cover of the guns, we should begin to fight our way south.

The Colonel explained the position and gave us all our orders for the withdrawal from the main hilltop. We were to start at ten o'clock. When he had finished, he paused for a moment before turning to Bob.

"Bob," he said, eventually. "I'm afraid we shall have to leave the wounded behind."

Bob paused, too—just for a moment—before he replied. "Very well, sir. I quite understand the position."

We went back to our respective places of duty to make preparations for the withdrawal.

A Company were to be the first to leave. We distributed our remaining ammunition among those fit to bear arms and made the walking wounded as comfortable as possible. Each rifleman had three rounds; each Bren, one and a half magazines; each Sten, a half magazine. There were seven Mills and four white-phosphorous smoke grenades left. With this armament we were going to fight our way back across at least four miles of hill country. We destroyed everything

that might be of the smallest use to the enemy and then sat back to await the time when we should move.

In front of us, the blackened surface of the hill still smoked from the napalm fires; the mound lay bare and deserted—no longer a menace, now that its cover was destroyed. One by one, the minutes ticked away towards ten o'clock.

At three minutes to ten, I gave the sign to Jumbo to set off with the main body of A Company, and rejoined battalion headquarters; for A Company were now so weak that one officer could command them without difficulty. I reached the Colonel just as he finished talking on the rear-link wireless, and I saw that his face was grave.

"Let Sam know," he said, "that I have just been told by the Brigadier that the guns are unable to support us—the gun lines are under attack themselves. Our orders are quite simple: every man to make his own way back."

Destroyed Their Gear

He began talking to the other companies on the wireless, as I ran over to Sam's headquarters. All was bustle now. Above Spike's positions, the machine-gun section was destroying their heavy gear as I went back to the ridge. Nearby, I met Bob returning to the regimental aid post from a talk with the Colonel. The signallers had already destroyed their sets, and Henry was stamping on the ashes of the codebook he had just burnt. We were all ready to move.

In small groups, the headquarters split up and ran over the ridge. When they had gone, I, too, came up on to the ridge crest and prepared to descend the other side. Bob was standing alone by the path that led to the steep slopes below us.

"Come on, Bob," I said. "We're about the last to go—you ought to have gone before this. The Colonel will be off in a minute and that will be the lot."

He looked at me for a moment before saying: "I can't go. I must stay with the wounded."

Too moved to speak, I clapped my hand upon his shoulder and went on.

All the way up the valley I had heard machine-gun fire sounding and resounding among the hills; but none had been directed at us. Only now, as the walls of the valley seemed to close right in upon us in this dark and cheerless spot—now almost a ravine—did we feel the breath of the enemy's fire.

From the hills on either side, from the hills to our rear, light and heavy machine-guns fired towards us. Yet they did not hit us. There can be no doubt that, had they wished to, they could have mown us down like grass before a scythe.

Exposed entirely to their weapons we moved along the path under the very muzzles. The message they conveyed was quite plain: we are up here, you are down there; you are exposed, we are concealed and you are in our sights.

Death—Or Surrender

As we moved on the fire from three machine-guns came down again, this time a good deal lower—unmistakably lower. I knew there was but one course open to me if the men with me were to remain alive for more than five minutes. Feeling as if I were betraying everything that I loved and believed in, I raised my voice and called, "Stop!"

The men stopped and looked towards me, their faces expectant. I shall never know what order they anticipated. Then I said: "Put down your arms."

A few seconds later, just at the foot of the saddle, I heard Sam say the same thing to those with whom he had moved. The words rang in my ears like an echo, a shameful echo. After all that we had done, after all the effort we had exerted in fulfilling our task, this was the end: surrender to the enemy.

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CURTAIN CALL

Continued from page 13

happiness, sniffing the odour of dust and disinfectant from the shrouded seats, watching the birth of this child of his brain and his desperate longing.

The pattern of his life beyond the confines of the theatre blurred into insignificance. The gilded arch of the proscenium with its carved columns had become the boundary between reality and fantasy. Only now the values were reversed, so that the world of fantasy was the real, the living one, which alone had meaning and integrity for him.

The front of house bills were up, Madeleine Rickards's name was being set in lights, and pictures of her and the other principal members of the cast had appeared in huge frames on either side of the entrance. Owing to a breakdown of arrangements for a provincial try-out, Jacobi had decided to "open cold" in the West End. Advance publicity had been good and the house was booked solid for the opening.

The days crawled by until the dress rehearsal, which was chaotic. It seemed to Robert inconceivable that the first performance could be anything but the wildest fiasco. He was astounded when Jacobi came up to him after the fall of the curtain and warmly wrung his hand.

"We've got a winner, if ever I saw one," he said, beaming. Then, when Robert's mouth gaped, "What's the matter? Aren't you satisfied? You ought to be. Ridgeway's done wonders. No one like him. Worth every penny of what it cost to get him away from Stratford."

Twenty-four hours to go. Twelve hours. Two. One.

THE car waited below. Virginia was hopping about the bedroom, a silver sandal dangling from her left foot by its broken strap. "Damn, damn, damn!"

Robert stood in the doorway tugging at his black tie, fuming with impatience, quaking with nerves. "For heaven's sake, Jinny—the curtain's due up in less than half an hour."

"I'm ready, all but this misbegotten thing. It won't take a minute to mend it—"

"Mend it? What are you talking about?" He dived at the lower shelf of her closet. "You've got dozens of other pairs. Here—wear these. Wear anything. Go barefoot, only hurry, hurry!"

Meekly, she kicked off the silver shoes and put on the black satin ones he tossed to her. "Sorry, darling. I didn't mean to be silly. I don't quite know what I'm doing." She stood up and smoothed her corn-yellow hair, sprayed perfume on it and slung a mink stole round her shoulders. "There. How do I look? Good enough to be the wife of the famous playwright?"

"You'll do," he said softly.

She came close and put her arms about him. "Your first first night, my love. May there be many more."

"If they're all as much of an ordeal as this one," he said wryly. "I'd sooner fight another war." He put his lips to her soft hair. "Let's go."

Griffiths, the young mechanic from the garage who was to drive them to-night, sprang out and opened the rear door of the car. "Best of luck, sir," he said as Robert approached.

Virginia got in. No sooner had she seated herself than she cried, "Oh Bob. My good-luck thing. I've left it behind."

"Hell, Jinny—forget it."

"I can't. I won't go without it. Please, darling, fetch it for me. It should be on my dressing table. If it's not there, it'll be in the top drawer of my bureau."

Robert ran back. The "good-luck" thing was a gold amulet representing the head of Ganesha, the elephant god. He had bought it in Calcutta. It was the first present he had given Virginia and she had a superstitious regard for it.

Needless to say, it was not on her dressing table. He hurried into the small sitting-room which was her



private domain and tugged open the bureau drawer so violently that it fell out, its contents scattering over the carpet.

He could not avoid seeing the letter because it fluttered, face upwards, to his feet. The heading was familiar to him. It was that of the firm of lawyers who handled her affairs.

"Dear Mrs. Amory. With regard to the matter on which you instructed us, on the occasion of your visit last week, we have to inform you that the figure required by Jacobi Productions, Ltd., for the presentation of the play *Uncle Mortimer* has now been agreed at £7,000. If you will kindly let us have your draft for this amount we will proceed with the contract, which will be forwarded in due course for your signature. We beg to remain, faithfully yours—O. E. Henchard. (p.p. Henchard, Dowsett and Latimer)."

It hit him like a physical blow between the eyes. The blood drained from his face and the room spun round in a crazy gyration, so that he had for that fearful instant the sensation of being in an aircraft diving to earth out of control. Only it was not an aircraft that dived and shattered but his joy and pride in himself, and the wreckage was that of an eight years' dream—in the very hour of fulfilment.

So that was how it had been done. Smoothly, unbeknown to himself, by a simple instruction to a lawyer and the passing of a cheque. As an indulgent woman might buy a costly gift to keep her lover contented.

His play had not been accepted because it was good, but because Joel Jacobi had been paid by Virginia to present it—as presumably he would have been ready to stage a spectacle of any other kind provided the bribe were high enough.

He picked up the letter and went down to the car. The engine was running. He climbed in, Griffiths let in the clutch and they glided off.

Virginia said, "Did you find it, darling?"

For answer, he laid the letter in her lap. "I found this instead."

She gave a startled cry. "Oh, Bob—"

They stared at each other, while the lights of oncoming cars flashed and flickered on their faces.

He held himself in, not wanting to hurt her. "I can see why you did it. You don't have to explain. But

couldn't you have had enough faith in me to wait just a little longer? I'd have pulled it off eventually, you know."

"Bob, I'd give anything for you not to have found this letter."

"Well, I did. I ought to be grateful to you, I suppose. I wonder if you will ever understand why I'm not?"

"I do understand. That's why I meant it to be a secret. You said just now that I don't have to explain. But it seems that I do."

She put her hand on his arm. "Bob, listen to me. I didn't do this for the reason you suppose. I did it because I had faith in the play, not only in you. No matter who wrote it, I'd have backed it if I'd been offered the chance. Jacobi was very keen on the play, but it was too unconventional for him to risk all his own capital on. So I asked if he would consider it a fair risk with outside backing. And he said yes, that put a different complexion on it. He was ready to stake his reputation on the play."

Robert was silent. Nothing she had said, neither her deep distress nor her passionate desire to convince him, lightened the load of his bitterness. He loosened his fingers from his arm and sat withdrawn into his corner until the car swung into Shaftesbury Avenue and joined the stream of vehicles converging on the Regency Theatre. Light poured from the portico on to the gleam of evening dress and bare shoulders as the first-nighters thronged in.

ABOUT fifty yards short, on a level with the pit queue, Griffiths slowed the car to a standstill, waiting for the cars in front of him to discharge their passengers.

Robert opened the rear door and let himself out.

Virginia said wildly, "What are you doing?"

"I'm not coming in," he said. "You go ahead. Maybe I'll join you later. I don't know."

"Oh, Bob—"

He swung the door to and turned away, leaving her staring through the window, her eyes wide with panic. The car slid forward, taking her from him.

He began to walk away, past the tail end of the queue, past the billboards shouting his name and the name of his play from the corner of the building. He gave them scarcely a glance. He turned up an alley, turned again, and found himself outside the stage door. He went in, ignoring the knot of people

clustered there, and the deferential greeting of the doorman, and climbed the stairs leading to the back entrance of the managerial offices. His pace quickened as he went, as if with the hardening of his resolution.

Jacobi made a practice of never watching an opening of his own show. He remained in his sanctum till it was over, keeping in communication with the box office and the house manager through the internal telephone. He was startled when Robert burst in upon him.

"What on earth are you doing here? Why aren't you in your box? What do you want?"

"I want you to take this play off. Tomorrow. No matter whether it's a success or a flop. Stop it. Kill it. Do you hear?"

"Good God, have you gone mad?"

"No. And it's not a case of first-night nerves, if that's what you're thinking. It's my play, and I want it taken off. I've still got some rights in it."

"Not that one, my boy. You forfeited that on the day you signed the contract."

"If you won't kill it, I will. There must be some way—"

Jacobi fought down his consternation. Years of experience in dealing with the creative temperament came to his aid. He forced his tone to affability and calm.

"What is all this? Close the door and tell me all about it. Don't stand there and bellow."

Robert told him, in short explosive sentences, through gritted teeth. When he had finished Jacobi said, "There's no need to call it a plot. It was a perfectly orthodox business arrangement between your wife and myself." He rose, a plump, dapper little man who was used to assuming control of all situations, however bizarre. "Seems to me that what we need is a drink. Let's go and get it."

JACOBI took him to a small pub in a back street close by and ordered double whiskies. He allowed no time for further philippics but kept up a flow of small talk with the elderly bartender, whom he introduced to Robert as "my friend Harry, who has nursed me through many a first night in his time, haven't you, Harry?"

"I have indeed, sir," Harry said. "Always glad to see you, Mr. Jacobi. How's the house tonight?"

"Capacity. I think we have an ambassador in front. The omens are propitious. Let's hope the gods will be kind. This is Mr. Robert Amory, author of the play."

"I'm happy to meet you, sir."

Robert nodded curtly.

"Help yourself to your fancy, Harry, and wish us luck," Jacobi said.

Harry was a thin man with waving iron-grey hair. His features, though of a melancholy cast, had mobility and distinction. His voice was precisely modulated, a trifle grandiloquent. The mannerisms, like the face, resembled those of an actor of a bygone era.

Robert had swallowed his drink at a gulp, but Jacobi sipped, very much at his ease, and becoming increasingly expansive.

"My friend Harry here," he announced, "is a tragedian *manqué*, an unfrocked votary of the theatre whose destiny has eluded him. Isn't that right, Harry?"

"It is, sir. The stage is in my blood, as you might say, though I wasn't born to it. My father was a sexton, and every time he caught me going to our local playhouse he would flog me till I couldn't stand. Finally he indentured me to a bootmaker. Twice I ran away, but I was found and brought back. I didn't give up hope, though, not for many years—not till my father died and I was landed with a mother and three sisters to keep. That was the end of it. I had to work so hard that the ambition was beaten out of me. . . ."

"Hard luck," Robert muttered perfunctorily. Still fuming with resentment and obsessed with his personal preoccupation, he had heard little of this recital save that it had a sad conclusion which seemed to merit some sign of sympathy. The man went on



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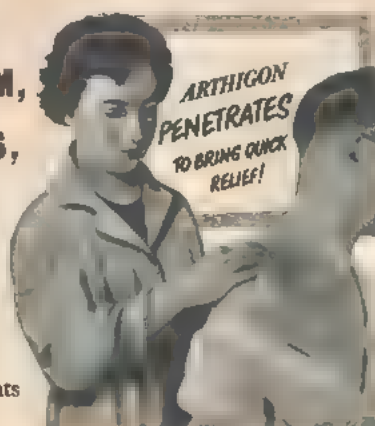
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talking. Jacobi nodded, throwing in an occasional comment.

Impatiently, Robert tugged his arm. "Let's get out of here. I want to do some talking myself."

Jacobi ignored him, signing to Harry to fill their glasses. Robert took his and sat down at a nearby table, his shoulders hunched. Harry had a fine resonant voice and knew how to use it. Gradually it began to compel Robert's attention. His resentment subsided and his taut nerves and muscles relaxed. Poor devil, he thought. It was tough all right. He knew what frustration was. He had had eight years of it, eight years of waiting for the chance that never came. This man had had a lifetime of it.

How long it went on, Robert never knew. He lost count of time. Drugged, quiescent he sat there drawn so far out of himself that he forgot his mortification, his anger with Virginia, forgot even what was going on in the hushed and crowded building less than a hundred yards away.

The bar had begun to fill up. Harry's discourse was punctuated by the rattle of glasses, the squirt and fizz of the beer tap, the ping of the cash register. But it never wholly ceased. He had got to Hamlet now. After carefully wiping down the counter, he struck an attitude and declaimed:

"... the devil hath power
T'assume a pleasing shape; yea, and
perhaps
Out of my weakness and my melancholy,
As he is very potent with such
spirits,
Abuses me to damn me I'll have
grouses
More relative than this,—the play's
the thing
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of
the king."

"Wonderful stuff, Harry, wonderful stuff," said Jacobi. And then, looking at his watch, "Well, the play is the thing. Let's see how it's doing."

They went in together through the stage door, along winding passages, picking their way through the litter and tangle of the scene dock. The curtain was going down. It fell in a stark silence that was succeeded by a storm of sound, like the boom and roar of heavy surf. The cheering rose, ebbed, broke out again and was sustained.

Ridgeway hovered in the wings his hair on end, his eyes snapping, while the company grouped itself on stage and the heavy drapes soared up again. Down and up—a second, a third time. Another note had crept now into the roar from the auditorium, a single word reiterated with rhythm and insistence. Jacobi said, "Take your call, Bob."

Robert walked uncertainly on to the stage. The footlights blinded him. He had not rehearsed a speech and was trembling with fright. He stared wildly into the darkness beyond the orchestra pit and into the lesser gloom at the level of the first tier of boxes, until he had found what he sought. Virginia's pale throat glimmered above the line of the stole. Their eyes met in a long eloquent exchange. Then he opened his mouth and somehow the words came.

Into the sudden hush he said, "Thank you for the wonderful ovation you have given this play. So far as my producer and cast are concerned, I think it was deserved. The play itself—" He paused. His eyes returned to Virginia's and stayed there. "I was not in front tonight. I spent the time listening to a man who, like me, had great ambitions—but, unlike me, never got a chance to realize them. I have had my chance. And I just want to say thank you, to those who have given it to me."

She made no sign, but he saw by the movement of her throat that her breathing was hurried, and he sensed that she was near to tears. The clapping broke out again as the curtain fell for the last time.

The bright stage, the faces in heavy make-up, Jacobi's beaming smile, none of these had depth and clarity. Only one face, one figure, was real. Eagerly impatiently, he went to her. THE END

THE WONDERFUL PEOPLE

Continued from page 17

house in which she had been born and the parents she could scarcely recall, she stayed on, and married Jim.

She was gay when she came as his bride, she would make the farm shining and bright-shining and bright and new as their love. But gradually they descended into everyday things. The daily tasks which had seemed such fun became chores. A sick animal could be a disaster which preoccupied Jim for days and nights. The care he took of every penny began so to oppress her that she almost longed to commit small extravagances out of spite.

By the time she was twenty, the gaiety had died out of her, save for occasional spurts and flashes, to which he sometimes responded. But more often there was no response from him except a tiredness, a yawning after the labours of the day.

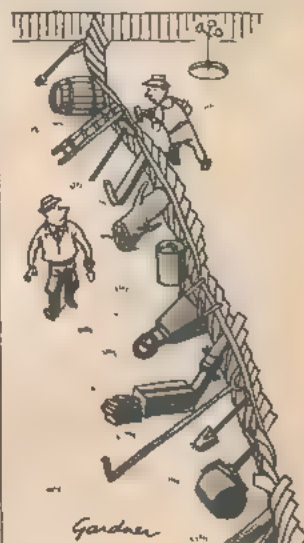
They could have had children. Sometimes he diffidently hinted as much. But she shrank from that—not because she was afraid of childbirth, but from a feeling that once she started children her youth was over. Of course, in the end she would have children, but she longed first for some excitement, some change, some last fling. And gradually she began to centre these thoughts on the hunt ball to be held in the market town, to which the small farmers and their wives were annually invited. Jim had at last consented to take her.

She had thought about it, and planned for it for weeks. There was a dress, a blue dress, in the town draper's. It was gaspingly expensive. But Jim had always let her keep the money from the few hens in the yard, which she tended. She bought the dress.

That evening she had put it on and come nervously down to show him. His face had lit with pleasure; and then he had asked where she got it, how much it had cost. And when she told him, his eyes darkened, his voice grew angry. She replied, reasonably, that the egg money was hers, but her explanation seemed to infuriate him more than ever. To spend that on a dress, when the farm needed so much.

Then it was she who flared up. The dullness, the misery of her life. Out it all came. The row went on and on, corrosively. Finally he said flatly that he would not go to the ball. And she cried angrily that if he didn't it was all over, she would leave him. To which he shouted good riddance. And she rushed upstairs in a fury, pulled down a suitcase, started to pack.

So now she waited at the door for



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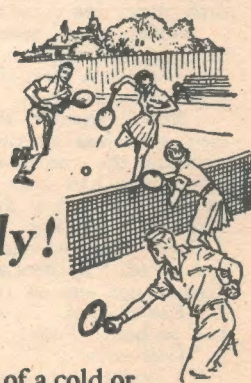
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the taxi, and Jim remained shut in his room, apparently not even coming to say goodbye. She stifled her tears and hardened her thoughts. Where would she go? Tonight, to Martha in the village; that was easy. But after?

Suddenly she saw the headlights of the taxi at the end of the lane groping towards the house. It was settled then. Tomorrow she would go to London. She had some cousins there who would take her in. She would manage. And she would see something of the world of busy people whom she had watched travelling past, night by night, in the trains.

As though to support her, at that moment she saw the distant lights and heard the accumulating sound of the night express as it came along the embankment.

Fred Jenkins pulled up his taxi and got out to open the door for her. As he did so, his face was lit by a bright orange glow, and astonishment came into his eyes.

Not understanding, she swivelled round to look behind her. The train stood out on the embankment against the darkness as though in flight through the sky. From the engine darted a streak of flame, whipping back to the leading carriages. She stared, paralysed. Instantly the roar of the train changed into a howl of metal, a shriek that rose until it clamoured among the shadowy trees.

Next moment there was a noise like the rattle of giant milkchurns. Then the engine careered over the edge of the embankment and fell to its foot. After it went the coaches, rearing like horses startled by the flare of the fire. The train spilled down the embankment with a series of concussions, followed by a deep groan.

And then silence, broken only by the crackle of burning timber, and the sigh of steam.

"Dear Lord," Fred Jenkins was muttering. "Dear Lord. . ."

From behind her, Jim came running out of the house. She clung to his arm, crying, "The train. The train."

He shook off her hand. To Jenkins he said, "Drive into the town for help. Get a doctor." And to Judy, "Get on the phone to the police. And clear the kitchen for casualties. Get all the water you can boiling. Tear up all the cloth you can find for bandages." Then, without looking back, he began to run across the field towards the wreck of the train.

As he ran, the beam of his torch waving in the darkness, all thought of Judy faded from his mind. His eyes were fixed on the black huddle at the far side of the field, and the lazy flames that illuminated one end of it.

People were wandering in small, dazed groups, pulling and tugging, crying to each other. He came to a large group: a woman and several men bent, heaving, to free a man pinned by the legs beneath a steel strut; an old man with half-closed eyes.

"Now," shouted the woman. The men wrenched at the strut, another man and the woman drew out the old fellow who had been trapped. When he was clear, they dropped the strut back with a clang.

Then the woman noticed Jim, and asked, "Is there a doctor coming? There's not one on the whole train." "I've phoned. He should be here in half an hour. Police, too."

"Half an hour!" "I doubt if he can get here any sooner. Are there any casualties you can move? The wife's getting bandages ready at the farm."

"Plenty," said a short, thick-set man, who had turned away to supervise the removal of the elderly man. He moved off towards the embankment, to give directions to the people who hovered over a row of figures stretched upon the ground. All along the foot of the embankment there were moving shadows, figures, an elderly woman who had taken off her dress and was ripping it into bandages, a cluster of children around a tall thin man who was holding their attention with a story. Somewhere a baby was bawling, and a man weeping.

Jim scrambled a short way up the

OH, JOHNNY!

by TIM



embankment, to see where he could be of most use. It was at once apparent. Most of the coaches had been skied and twisted, but the two front coaches had been telescoped against the tender and the engine, and caught by the fire which now, mercifully, was flickering out. There was a stench—of burnt oil and timber and cloth, of the acidity of steam, and of a stronger, sicklier burning smell. His stomach turning, Jim hurried to the front coaches.

When he reached them, he stopped and stared in horror. He was still standing there when his arm was taken from behind, and a voice said grimly, "Not up there, mate. We've already looked. There's nothing to be done."

Jim turned with his torch. It was the short man who had organised the trek towards the farm. There was a smear of blood across his face. Jim was turning away, sickly, when they heard it. The whisper of a child crying. The two men gazed at each other and then, in the same moment, ran towards the leading coaches.

It was near the rear of the second coach. From somewhere in the middle of the debris, the cry was repeated. Jim swivelled his torch, and saw with a gulp of gratitude that the fire had not reached back quite that far.

The short man flung himself on the wreckage, pulling at it with his hands, shouting, "It's all right, we're coming."

But Jim put him aside. "You've had enough. You're done, mate. Hold the torch."

The man stumbled a little, but obeyed. Jim felt around for a lever, and began gingerly to prise away a layer of carriage door and roof that formed the outside wall of the mass. It would not budge. He summoned all his strength, and strained. It gave a little. The short man dropped the torch and added his sudden weight to the thrust. The wreckage groaned, cracked, and came up.

Jim groped for the torch and shone it through the hole. It lit up a grotesque parody of a railway carriage. The impact had flattened the front wall backwards, carrying it down towards the floor, but a trunk-size suitcase that must have been on the rack had arrested it in the middle. In the little cave thus formed lay a boy of about ten years, seemingly caught only by one foot. Around him was wedged and poised a tangle of steel and timber; to try to move it would most likely send it squeaking down. There was also, caught up in the tangle, a bundle of cloth that Jim suddenly saw covered the twisted body of a woman. The boy was staring at the torch with terrified eyes.

"I'll go in," said Jim. "Take it gently then," cautioned the short man. "I'll get some folks to try to hold it up."

Jim shoved the torch into his shirt and began to edge himself into the

wreck. He still had the lever, with which he cautiously prised at impediments—woodwork that ripped easily aside, steel that did not. The sharpness that lacerated his knees and elbows was, he realized, splinters of glass. The boy watched him in silence.

Moving carefully, he managed to get as far as the woman's body, and, touching it, found it warm. He craned back towards the entrance, calling to the short man, who had returned with help. "I think the woman is just about alive."

He peered round with the torch, assessing possibilities. The back of the carriage seat had thrust her down, doubling her legs under her, spreading out one arm and hand. She was a young woman, fair hair.

"If you can shift the mess on top of this," he called back, "I think I can get her out."

Two of the men climbed with great care on to the wreckage, lifting away piece after piece. Jim waited. Then he saw that the woman's head was moving. He bent down, and she opened her eyes. He put his ear by her mouth, to catch a whisper.

"Larry." It was so faint, mouthed with such painful effort, that he was not sure he had heard right.

"The boy? He's all right. Don't you worry."

"Get him out," she whispered. Then her eyes fell shut again.

"We'll get you both out," he cheerfully assured her, not knowing whether she could hear, or would ever hear anything again. He looked upwards at the shifting wreckage.

There was a steel plate that was easing a bit, and he contrived to get his fingers under the back of the carriage seat, then one arm. He heaved. It gave a little. He twisted his body in an effort to get under. Suddenly the steel plate slipped, only by a few inches, and pinned his arm, helpless. He was amazed that there was no pain.

THE short man, on top, saw what had happened, clutched at the steel. Two others joined him to raise it. Jim levered with his good arm, got a foot under, a leg, then the hump of his back. There were cracking noises from the wreck. As they lifted it, he gradually raised his back, holding. The mist on his eyes was sweat. He knew that he could hold for only a minute or so. Then he saw a baulk of timber, got his fingers on it, then his forearm round it, and jugged it up as a wedge.

Two pairs of arms came in from outside, clapping at the woman, gently raising her body clear. Now there was the boy. How was he to keep the wreckage up with his back, and also move in to free the boy's foot? He looked doubtfully at the wedge he had made, but dared not test it. He would have to take that risk. He lowered his

body to get under a spar, and slowly began to squeeze round to face inwards. As he raised himself, the boy's head appeared by the top of the trunk. "Are you free, son?" he asked.

The boy nodded. Jim saw that, by luck, the lifting that had released the mother's twisted shape had also freed whatever had trapped the boy's foot.

"Now look, this isn't easy, but we'll manage it. I'm going to stay where I am. I want you to squeeze round the edge of this trunk, then under me, and out through the hole on the other side of me. Get it? Right, let's start."

The boy's head disappeared. Jim waited in agony. He felt the boy's hand touching his leg, then the width of his shoulders. "Good lad," he encouraged.

With an effort, he got his back against the carriage seat again, and humped it still farther. The timber creaked. The baulk that he had put in as a wedge loosened and fell sideways. He took all the weight upon his arched back as the boy crawled beneath him. Jim could just see the hands that reached in to pull him clear.

Up above, a man was hauling on the wreckage, trying to take some of the weight from him, calling encouragement. Jim shifted his body slowly, inch by inch, trying to work towards the exit. Something fell behind him; but he made another few inches. A hand came grasping towards him, then another. "Be quick," he gasped. He felt two solid grips under his armpits.

"Pull," he yelled. They yanked him out like a cork—and the wreckage rumbled, groaned, and settled down behind him.

"Nice work," said the short man.

JIM looked around, saw the boy, and tenderly went to lift him; only then did he find that his left arm was useless. He hoisted the boy with his good arm. He was suddenly aware that the whole scene had lightened. There were lights everywhere, men everywhere. Over towards the farm, the lane was dazzling with lights. Across the field straggled a chain of lanterns. The rescue parties had arrived.

He felt an immense gratitude. To the boy clinging to his neck he said, "Come on, Larry, old son," and started off towards the lights.

At the kitchen door he met Dr. Pearce. "Is that boy all right?" the doctor asked.

"I think so, but—"

"Good." The doctor turned away.

And then the voice of Judy said, "Give him to me, Jim," and the boy was taken from him. He stared after her, suddenly remembering.

The doctor came over again, looked at his arm, and led him to a bench in the corner, ripping his sleeve, applying a dressing. "Nothing broken, he cheerfully remarked.

"Those people up there, Doc?" Jim said, "they were wonderful. Just ordinary people, but bloody wonderful."

"People are," said the doctor, busy at his dressing. "You don't find out till there's a crisis, then they turn up trumps. It was the same in the war—usually the unexpected people. That young wife of yours, now."

"Judy?"

"Frankly, I wouldn't have thought she had it in her. When I got here, she'd taken in all the casualties, bandaged them, made them tea. And they tell me she fixed up the barn for the dead. Took some guts, Jim, that. It wasn't pretty. There you are," he said, pinning down the sleeve, "I'll look at it again tomorrow."

Jim got up and wandered slowly through into the house, up the stairs, towards the bedroom, pausing at the door. She was kneeling by the bed, talking to the child, soothing. The candlelight glimmered on the line of her neck, on her hands, in the brownness of her hair.

She rose quietly and backed from the room, her eyes on the boy.

Jim put his arm on her shoulder, and pulled the door to, behind her.

"Judy," he whispered.

He held her close to him while she wept.

THE END

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